

**Coming into one's own:  
The novelistic development of  
Javier Marías (1971-1994)**

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# Contents

Declaration	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Synopsis	v
Introduction	1
<b>I</b> <i>Los dominios del lobo</i> and <i>Travesía del horizonte</i> : Progymnasmata	22
<b>II</b> <i>El siglo</i> : A question of style	52
<b>III</b> <i>El hombre sentimental</i> : The artistic imagination	85
<b>IV</b> <i>Todas las almas</i> : Imagining the autobiographical	117
<b>V</b> <i>Corazón tan blanco</i> : The effects of repetition	173
<b>VI</b> <i>Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí</i> : The interconnectedness of the world	239
Conclusion: The ontology of art	270
Bibliography	275



## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work it embodies has been done by myself.

**Signed:**

**2000**

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## Synopsis

Javier Marías is a major contemporary Spanish and European writer. This thesis is the first full-length study of his work in any language. It is an exploration of his development as a writer as reflected in his seven novels to date. The main focus of the analyses is on the form and stylistic development of the novels. Stylistic aspects which are discussed include imitative writing, sentence structure, and repetition. Major narrative themes such as truth, love, and death are treated as these relate to, and arise from, the novels' form.

In order to foreground Marías' novelistic evolution, each novel is discussed chronologically. Chapter I examines Marías' first two novels, *Los dominios del lobo* (1971) and *Travesía del horizonte* (1972), in the context of his, and his generation's (the *novísimos*), rejection of Spanishness (*lo español*). It demonstrates the novels' imitative nature through their indebtedness to foreign influences. Chapter II analyzes the crystallization, in *El siglo* (1983), of the author's realization of the primacy of manner over matter in his writing through what I identify as the novel's baroque form. Chapter III explores the importance of the creative imagination as reflected in the invention and the narrative of *El hombre sentimental* (1986). Chapter IV investigates the question of autobiography and fiction in *Todas las almas* (1989), showing that what is important is not the origin of the material, but rather the imaginative processes of association which enmesh it into the narrative fabric. Chapter V studies the significance of the various types of repetition (for example, of words, phrases, and images) and their effects (for example, emphasis, foreshadowing, and structural unification) in *Corazón tan blanco* (1992). Finally, Chapter VI traces the configuration of a distinct and significant *Weltanschauung* in *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* (1994), the interconnectedness of the world. This is shown to be the result of a synthesis of elements and stylistic features highlighted in previous works, such as digression, association, repetition, or the creative imagination.

This study sheds light on the novelistic development and maturation of Javier Marías, a major writer of his generation. It demonstrates how his novels evolve from initially playful works, imitative of other, foreign writers and characterized by a marked rejection of Spanishness, to more complex narratives consisting of a singular and intricate network of stylistic elements which configure meaningful and elaborate worlds, thereby also offering a distinctive vision of Spain. In so doing, the study contributes to a critical understanding of the changing face of Spanish novels since 1970.

## Introduction

Javier Marías is a major contemporary Spanish writer who has enjoyed considerable international success and recognition. His novels have been translated into 28 languages and have been published in 38 different countries. Close to 4 million copies of his works have been sold throughout the world. He has received 14 literary prizes for his work, of which half are international.<sup>1</sup> He is the author of 23 books (seven novels, one autobiographical narrative, three short story collections, six collections of articles and essays, two collections of biographical sketches and portraits of writers, two anthologies, and two collections-cum-homages, to Faulkner and Nabokov respectively). In addition, he has translated from English a number of literary works. He also makes frequent contributions to newspapers and magazines, writing regular articles for *El País* and, more recently, other European dailies such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Le Monde*, as well as contributing a weekly feature for the newspaper supplement *El Semanal* since December 1994. In addition, he has recently founded his own publishing house.

However, Marías is, first and foremost, a novelist and it is through his novels that he has made the most significant contribution to literature, writing, and language. He is a writer who has undergone a very interesting, intricate, yet clearly discernible novelistic evolution and one who has thus formed a very distinctive style of his own. It is this

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<sup>1</sup> He has been awarded the following literary prizes for his work: *El hombre sentimental* (Premio Herralde de Novela 1986, Premio Internazionale Ennio Flaiano 2000), *Todas las almas* (Premio Ciudad de Barcelona 1989), *Corazón tan blanco* (Premio de la Crítica 1993, Priz l'Œil et la Lettre 1993, IMPAC International Dublin Literary Award 1997), *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* (Premio Fastenrath 1995, Premio Internacional de Novela Rómulo Gallegos 1995, Premio Arzobispo Juan de San Clemente 1996, Prix Femina Étranger 1996, Premio Mondello Città di Palermo 1999). He also received in 1979 the Premio Nacional de Traducción for his translation of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. In 1997 he was awarded the Nelly Sachs Preis by the German city of Dortmund and in 1998 the Premio Comunidad de Madrid for the totality of his work.

novelistic development that I have chosen to study and I have therefore concentrated on the seven novels he has published to date: *Los dominios del lobo* (1971), *Travesía del horizonte* (1972), *El siglo* (1983), *El hombre sentimental* (1986), *Todas las almas* (1989), *Corazón tan blanco* (1992), and *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* (1994).

I have excluded from my discussion the book entitled *El monarca del tiempo* (1978), which Marías has sometimes referred to as a novel, although he has also cast doubt on this (Marías 1995, 7). I have not studied it because, strictly speaking, it is not a novel: it consists of three short stories, a short play, and an essay, and lacks the minimal unity of form and style, as well as of story line, characters, action, or thought that one would associate even with a novel which stretches the definition of the term. Moreover, its fragmentary nature is further emphasized by the following facts: unlike his seven novels which have all been reissued at least once by the original or a different publisher, no new issue of this book has appeared or been sought by the author, attesting a reluctance to see it reappear in its original book form; instead, it has survived in what is a more appropriate disjointed shape, as almost all of its parts have been published separately in short story and essay collections. Similarly, I have not devoted a separate discussion to *Negra espalda del tiempo* (1998), as it is not a work of fiction. It is an autobiographical narrative and, therefore, not a novel in the strict sense, and it represents a very interesting but separate development in Javier Marías's work. Nevertheless, I refer to it in Chapter IV, since it is closely related to *Todas las almas* and to questions of autobiography and fiction addressed in that chapter.

I have chosen a chronological approach for my study, looking at each novel in turn, because chronology is crucial to an understanding of Javier Marías's development. A quarter of a century elapses between the writing of *Los dominios del lobo* in 1969 and

the publication of *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* in 1994 and, despite their radical differences, his first and last novels frame a perceptibly interrelated process which unfolds chronologically and which gradually sees Marías come into his own. The novels, in the order of their creation, reflect the evolution and the process of maturation as each contributes to the configuration of this development by giving shape to, and being shaped by, formal and stylistic elements that come to form part of his writing. Thus, a figure of growth is generated and characterizes Marías' progression. In fact, if it were not for the indeterminacy and subjectivity of the term, each novel could be said to be 'better' than the previous one, in that each is, arguably, more intricate, mature, accomplished, and forges a richer, more suggestive and elaborate imaginative world than the preceding one.

The choice of focus for each chapter is determined by what I have identified as the most significant formal and stylistic aspects of each novel in the light of Javier Marías' evolution. Form and style are understood broadly enough to encompass the method of literary creation. It has to be said that I did not set out to look for these formal and stylistic features as I was reading Marías' work. Instead, these aspects have to a great extent suggested and imposed themselves over purely thematic ones. In my opinion this is not accidental: Javier Marías' novels are in many ways as much about form and style, including language, as they are about the content (the characters, actions, ideas, or themes), since the former are consciously and constantly foregrounded, drawing attention to the manner in which matter is treated and given shape, to which I will from time to time refer – borrowing the 'terms' from J. Hillis Miller, as well as paraphrasing Shoshana Felman – as the *how* rather than the *what* (see Felman 1982a, Miller 1982). At the same time, however, this thesis does not avoid thematic criticism –

not least because the dichotomy of form and content is to some extent an artificial one and cannot be rigorously sustained<sup>2</sup> – as narrative themes such as death, love, truth, or the imagination are treated in their interrelationship with form.

Chapter I examines Marías' first two novels in the context of his and his generation's – the *novísimos* – rejection of Spanishness.<sup>3</sup> *Los dominios del lobo* and *Travesía del horizonte* are both works imitative of foreign texts (the former of Hollywood films of the 30s, 40s, and 50s, the latter of Edwardian writers Henry James and Joseph Conrad). Marías and the *novísimos* consciously react to and break with Spanish literary tradition (especially Spanish novels under Franco and the mimesis, realism, seriousness, localism, as well as the emphasis on 'message' that characterized many of them) and, more generally, any manifestation of Spanishness (except, obviously, for the language itself). Marías' first two novels also conform to the view of imitation as an early form of literature, in that imitation becomes his way into literature. As instances of imitative writing they are also consciously anti-realist and concomitantly attest, from the outset of Marías' development, a belief in the autonomy of literature and a self-conscious awareness of the importance of form, since the emphasis is not so much on the message as it is on the medium.

Chapter II considers the ways in which *El siglo* represents Marías' conscious attempt to refine his medium, the crystallization of the realization of the primacy of style in his writing. I examine the novel's essentially baroque form, in great part influenced by seventeenth-century English literature and Sir Thomas Browne in particular. We see how the attention of the reader is diverted more to the treatment than to the matter,

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the schools of thought on the degree of independence of style and content from each other – especially dualism (style as the 'dress of thought' or as manner of expression and therefore separable), monism (the inseparability of style and content), and pluralism (analysis of style in terms of functions) – see Leech and Short (1981, 10–41).

<sup>3</sup> This rejection and Marías' affinities with the *novísimos* are discussed later in this introduction.



through a conscious exaggeration of the text's formal properties (narrative voice, sentence structure, diction, and the choice of rhetorical devices and figures). His third novel sees the introduction of specific stylistic features, such as first person narration, digression and errancy, conjecture, uncertainty, repetition, and aphorisms, as well as the surfacing of certain themes (for example, death and the interconnectedness governing the world), which become permanent elements of his subsequent novels.

Chapter III analyzes the important role of the imagination in Marías' writing as reflected in the creative writing process and, in particular, the narrative and style of his fourth novel. I examine how certain processes of the creative imagination are enacted in the narrative of *El hombre sentimental* and in its style. The equation of the narrator's dream-like state with imaginative activity, the errancy and digressiveness of his first person narrative, the twofold role of uncertainty, the centrality of imagination in love and the likening of the latter with fiction, as well as the ability, through the freedom of the processes of association not governed by reason, to make what is absent present, recreate the past, anticipate the future, or incarnate potential worlds, are all discussed as they mirror the author's creative writing processes and contribute to the thematization of the workings of the creative imagination. Furthermore, a very close interrelationship between imagination and style comes to light in the discussion and, following Immanuel Kant, it is suggested that art has its own ontology as a result of this free and disinterested 'play' of the imagination.

Chapter IV studies the question of autobiography and fiction with regard to *Todas las almas*. A detailed examination of the importance of the contextual markers which determine the type of reading, the relationship between the novel's narrator and author and that between other characters and living persons, the ontological status of the

novel and an analysis of the imaginative and stylistic aspects and processes which control the construction and nature of the narrative, and other elements, show that the incorporation of biographical material into the novel obeys the same principles and processes as that of all material, irrespective of its origins. It is unprivileged and submitted to the same processes of fictionalization through the interplay between imagination and style in the operations governing the association of elements. Hence, what is of importance, as far as the narrative is concerned, is not *what* the nature or origin of the material is, but *how* it is enmeshed, the way or manner in which it is treated and woven into the narrative fabric.

Chapter V explores the significance and effects of repetition in *Corazón tan blanco*. Repetitions of phonemes, letters, morphemes, words, clauses, sentences, descriptions, objects, gestures, actions, scenes, images, ideas, motifs, and themes are shown to have the following effects in the narrative: echoing and foreshadowing, linking and unifying the narrative, generating rhythmic associations, shaping a particular temporal movement, emphasizing the materiality of language, and creating configurations of the uncanny. Thus, repetition is shown to be a fundamental stylistic feature of Marías' œuvre, nowhere more evident than in his sixth novel, where it acquires a previously unparalleled significance.

Finally, Chapter VI unveils a latent and significant *Weltanschauung* in *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí*, where Marías achieves a consummate synthesis and equilibrium of significant elements prevalent in previous novels, such as the influence of foreign literatures, a loose and digressive style, aphorisms, similes, the manifestation of a significant creative imagination, associative processes of fictionalization of material, the presence of uncertainty, and repetition. The configuration of the view of the world as

interconnected is the outcome of the productive association of precisely all the above elements and is also related to a definite turn to Spain as the prominent setting and backdrop to his narrative world.

Consequently, Marías can be said to come into his own in his later work and in his last novel in particular, where a concrete and all-embracing *Weltanschauung* is given a definite shape as a result of the culmination of a formal and stylistic development, coupled with a homecoming in the form of the choice of Madrid as setting and its significance for the narrative. Marías' novelistic development is thus shown to be characterized by a process of formal and stylistic maturation. This also has an impact on the evolution of his themes in that they become more developed and elaborate, as demonstrated by the crystallization of the very pronounced world view in *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí*. After the initial radical rejection of Spain and things Spanish in the first two novels, a turn to Spain as a significant setting culminates in the emphasis on Madrid in his last novel.

I have already indicated that the origins of Javier Marías' novelistic development constitute in great measure a reaction to Spanish novels under Franco and, in particular, the Spanishness, mimesis, realism, seriousness, localism, as well as the emphasis on 'message' that characterized many of them. Although perhaps a somewhat unjust and extreme reaction, this beginning is indispensable to understanding his novelistic evolution as a whole, as it has a determining influence on his development, not least through the pivotal significance of form and style in his work. Thus, in order to understand Marías' development and why, from the outset, he turns his back on Spanishness and realism, and places the emphasis of his novels on form and style, rather than on themes or messages, on the *how* rather than the *what*, as well as in order to

understand the significance of the tentative and gradual turn to Spain in his later novels, I think it is important that we remind ourselves to what he, together with many of his contemporaries, was in great part reacting. The following brief section will help to place Marías contextually within twentieth-century Spanish fiction, just as the next section on the *novísimos* will locate him within his own generation of writers.

### *The Spanish novel from 1939 to 1970*

There is no doubt that the dominant literary mode characterizing the majority of novels written under Franco and especially in the 1940s, 50s, and early 60s is realism, which takes different forms (see, for example, Margaret Jones' useful divisions of the various types of realism, ranging from traditional realism, *tremendismo*, objective neorealism, *objetivismo*, *novela social*, to subjective neorealism [Jones 1985]).<sup>4</sup> The development of Spanish literature this century has been profoundly marked by the Civil War and its aftermath. (It is significant, however, that this was a war which Marías' generation of writers did not directly witness, as they were all born after 1939.) The loss of human life, exile, financial ruin, and the disappearance of freedoms had a devastating effect on Spanish cultural life after the end of the conflict. This produced a rupture, a loss of contact and continuity with literary forerunners, also furthered by the regime itself, which was intent on creating a culture of its own from scratch (Ynduráin 1981, 319;

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<sup>4</sup> This is a point which is emphasized in all of the secondary bibliography on the Spanish novel under Franco that I have consulted (many of these also contain sub-divisions such as Jones'): Goytisolo 1967, Bosch 1973, García Viñó 1975, Benet 1976a, Castellet 1976, Alcover 1977, Spires 1978 and 1996, Basanta 1979, Sanz Villanueva 1980, Jones 1985, Ferreras 1988, Jordan 1990, Fuentes Molla 1991, Sanz Villanueva 1991, Vázquez Montalbán 1991, Mainer 1994, Labanyi 1995a, Vilanova 1995, Alvar 1997, Martínez Cachero 1997, Pope 1999. The most extensive relation of critical works on the Spanish novel since 1936 is Samuel Amell's annotated critical bibliography of 878 books and articles (Amell 1996). Another very useful and up-to-date critical bibliography containing references to 450 texts on the Spanish novel from 1936 to 1995 is appended in Martínez Cachero (1997, 661-806).

Fuentes Molla 1991, 135; Sanz Villanueva 1991, 20). This meant that Spanish literature was cut off from its immediate past, leading to what has been called *adanismo literario*.

These factors, coupled with the implementation of a rigid form of censorship and the political isolationism of Spain in the 1940s, created an insular, sterile, and hostile cultural environment during that decade, which saw the publication of comparatively few noteworthy novels by writers who became known as the *escritores de la posguerra*.<sup>5</sup> The novels produced in the 1940s are, therefore, like the remainder of writing produced under Franco, inseparable from their context, as Pope argues (1999, 138), something which is important to remember when we consider Marías' and his contemporaries' reaction to writing under Franco.

From the early 1950s onwards the so-called *novela social* began to emerge, a trend that became and remained dominant until the early 1960s. Prefigured by Cela's *La colmena* (1951), the *novela social* was an attempt to exploit the novel as a way of raising consciousness and critically reflecting Spain's reality.<sup>6</sup> As a result of the tight control and censorship of the Spanish mass media, the reporting and commentary of Spanish reality was partial and often non-existent. Thus, the reality portrayed by Franco's media contrasted with the reality experienced by most Spaniards. The writers felt compelled to assume the role and responsibilities of the media, striving 'to act both as a source of information of daily realities and social issues [...] and also as an instrument of socio-political critique' (Jordan 1990, viii-ix). They attempted this through features such as collective protagonists, juxtaposition of episodes and, crucially, by way of a 'stress on

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<sup>5</sup> Ferreras calls these immediate postwar novelists the *restauradores del realismo* (1988, 32). For a detailed discussion of the 1940s see Martínez Cachero's extensive section entitled 'Los difíciles y oscuros años 40' (1997, 51-160). Alcover emphasizes the mediocrity and sterility of that decade (1977, 18) and Castellet speaks of a 'desierto cultural' (1976, 136-7).

<sup>6</sup> On this point see Pope (1999, 140-1).

mimesis through character dialogue and narrative detachment' (Jordan 1990, 179).<sup>7</sup> In this undertaking they reflected, among other influences, the impact which Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* had in Spain at the time.<sup>8</sup> In this book, Sartre develops the concept of *engagement* and of a committed literature, of literature as an act, essentially arguing that writing is a transparent medium which can accurately represent reality *as it is* and an instrument which the writer can use to show a world in order to change it.<sup>9</sup> Barry Jordan briefly outlines the Sartrean view of literature, contrasting it with Barthes', as developed in *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*, for whom, as for Marías and his generation, 'the world *as it is* does not exist independently of its construction in language' and writing is not an unproblematic, simple reproduction of reality, a mere subordinate vehicle for the transmission of messages (Jordan 1990, vii-viii). The 1950s marked the zenith of novelistic mimesis in Spain (Spires 1996, 31).

The former view of literature, from the contemporary vantage point arguably a somewhat naïve or deluded conception, in part explains the gradual decline of the *novela social* in the 1960s: the writers felt that they failed in their attempt to write literature as they were carried away by extraliterary concerns.<sup>10</sup> But they had also fallen short in their political aims, as their novels failed to bring about the desired changes. 'Supeditando el arte a la política rendíamos un flaco servicio a ambos', writes Juan Goytisolo in the late 1960s, 'políticamente ineficaces nuestras obras eran, para colmo, literariamente mediocres; creyendo hacer literatura política no hacíamos ni una cosa ni otra' (Goytisolo

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<sup>7</sup> Vázquez Montalbán has argued that the novel as 'mimetic reproduction' is no longer acceptable (1991, 24).

<sup>8</sup> Other major sources of impact on the *novela social* include Italian neorealist cinema and the American realist novel of the interwar period. Barry Jordan's discussion of these and Sartre's impact is particularly enlightening (Jordan 1990, 84-128).

<sup>9</sup> 'Une littérature de la Praxis prend naissance à l'époque du public introuvable [...] Si l'écrivain est pénétré, comme je suis, de l'urgence de ces problèmes, on peut être sûr qu'il y proposera des solutions' (Sartre 1948, 356).

<sup>10</sup> Ignacio Echevarría has called it 'un malentendido de lo que es escribir una novela' (Echevarría 1997).



1967, 52; Conte 1990a, 129, affirms the same).<sup>11</sup> Other factors include Spain's changing social and economic reality as it was developing into a modern, industrialized country in the 1960s. The year 1962 is often cited as the turning point of the beginning of the demise of the *novela social*. That year saw the publication of Luis Martín Santos' *Tiempo de silencio*, a novel which broke the mould with its *realismo dialéctico*, characterized by a more complex narrative strategy, moving away from the more documentary realism of the *novela social*. However, this novel only started to become noticed after the break-up of the *novela social* and was in any case intended to enrich the movement (Jordan 1990, 178; Bértolo 1989, 34-35). 1962 was also the year in which Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros* (1962) was awarded the *Biblioteca Breve* literary prize, signalling the beginning of the influx and impact of Latin American literature and magical realism in particular, the so-called *boom*. In Jo Labanyi's words, 'the Latin American novel's international success offered a model for Spanish writers aware of their enforced provincialism, reminding them that revolutionary content needed to be matched by radical form' (Labanyi 1995a, 296).<sup>12</sup>

By the end of the 1960s the *novela social* had run its course and Spanish novels of the late 1960s became increasingly dominated by formal and linguistic experimentation.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, for the purposes of our subsequent discussion, it would

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<sup>11</sup> Pope describes much of that literature as 'well-meaning anthropological reporting in a situation of internal colonialism' (1999, 142). There seems to be a fairly widespread consensus that the obsession with politics was linked to a decline in the quality of literature produced at the time (see, for example, Butt 1978, 7-9, Benet 1981a, 28).

<sup>12</sup> For an interesting and detailed first-hand account of the implications for Spanish writers of the impact of Latin American fiction at that juncture see Vázquez Montalbán's assessment (1991, 17-18).

<sup>13</sup> By the late 60s there is a gradual shift from the *novela social* to novels in which, generally speaking, the writer's preoccupation with content/message has given way to experimentation with form, to questions surrounding the perception of reality itself, and to experimentation with different modes of representation. (On this phase of the Spanish novel see, for example, the following: Spires 1978, 173-352; Jones 1985, 97-124; Sanz Villanueva 1991, 158-179; Vilanova 1995, 415-445; Martínez Cachero 1997, 253-377; Herráez 1998, 19-41.) Jones calls this new development the *New Novel* (Jones 1985).

not be inaccurate to affirm, as does Jordan (1990), that the Spanish novel in the 1940s, 50s, and a great part of the 60s was dominated by realism and by a strong mimetic imperative, something against which Marías and his contemporaries would react very strongly.

Equally, it is worth highlighting that it was generally dominated by a tone of seriousness and a general lack of laughter (see, for example, Goytisolo 1967, 53; Sobejano 1979, 22; and de Azúa 1998b, 206-207), on which the opposition to Franco insisted, as the regime itself was promoting escapism and consumerist fun (Labanyi 1995a, 298). These writers could thus be described as *agelasts*, ‘laughterless’, to borrow a Greek term used by Bakhtin to qualify those upon whom the transmission of the written heritage of Ancient Rome rested and who ‘elected the serious word and rejected its comic reflections as a profanation’ (Bakhtin 1988, 138). Any novel that could be deemed to promote laughter or escapism could be accused of promoting the regime’s interests. I would venture to say that this explains why Ana María Matute did not dare publish her novel on a mythical and fantastic medieval world populated by gnomes, goblins, and fairies in the beginning of the 1970s, waiting for more than 25 years to see it in print in 1998 (Matute 1998, 70). This is also why Arturo Pérez-Reverte has maintained that at that time it would have been impossible to contemplate publication of his swashbuckling historical adventure novel *El capitán Alatriste* (Prado 1997, 58). And, more generally, it also explains why the range of genres was very restricted; it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that a more imaginative and more diverse range of



writing gradually unfolded.<sup>14</sup> Marías and his contemporaries rejected this seriousness and re-introduced laughter, imagination, and escapism into literature.

Furthermore, it is important to stress the fact that, during this time, the Spanish novel was firmly and more or less exclusively rooted in Spanish reality. Its realism, its attempts mimetically to reflect Spanish reality, its treatment of Spain as a problem and theme, meant that the novel became inextricably linked with Spain and notions of Spanishness, leaving itself open to the charge of parochialism (Spires 1996, 31 – a charge made also by writers of Marías' generation, such as Antonio Muñoz Molina and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán [Gazarián Gautier 1991, 225, 310-11]) and provincialism (Labanyi 1995a, 296). In fact, it is impossible to understand the majority of the novels produced at the time independently of the context of Spain, since the context and the texts are inextricably linked.<sup>15</sup> Arguably, 1970 sees the first clear indication of a radical change in Spanish writing, entailing a fundamental rejection of the realism, mimesis, seriousness, and Spanishness which characterized the majority of novels produced in the three decades following the end of the Civil War. Nora Catelli has described this break with Spanish tradition, in which Javier Marías played a notable but relatively unnoticed part, as unprecedented (1991, 146).

#### *'Me huele España': Marías and the novísimos*

In most studies of the post-Franco novel, 1975 is normally the year which is posited as the turning point signalling the changing nature of Spanish novels.<sup>16</sup> Although all of

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<sup>14</sup> As John Butt argues: 'In a situation in which all humane energies are devoted to attacking a particular regime, demands are put on literature which narrow its range [...] In the case of Spain, these demands unfortunately worked against the emancipation of language and imagination' (Butt 1978, 9).

<sup>15</sup> This is what, for example, Jones and Pope argue (Jones 1985, 124 and Pope 1999, 138, 145).

<sup>16</sup> See the following, for example: Ferreras 1988, Alonso 1989, Martín Nogales 1989, de Castro 1990, Lissorgues 1991, Sanz Villanueva 1991 and 1996, Rico 1992, de la Peña 1993, Ingenschay and

these critics recognize that the Spanish novel had already started changing in the 1960s and that these changes played a role in shaping novels produced in the democratic period, the frequent insistence on the choice of 1975 as the pivotal year for subsequent developments has almost become a cliché. Essentially, 1975 is seen as emblematic of the new direction because, not only is it the year of Franco's death and the consequent advent of democracy with its eventual abolition of all censorship, but it is also the year of the publication of Eduardo Mendoza's *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta*. Mendoza's novel is widely accepted as the precursor of post-Franco fiction, due to its self-conscious return to a more classical form of storytelling, combined with its use of elements of detective fiction and intrigue, parody, pastiche, and irony, and an accessible literary language (which contrasts with many of the more radical experimentations with novelistic language of the time).<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, Mendoza's response to the question of whether his work contains a special message has been: 'Messages are good for answering machines. All I want is to tell a story' (Gazarián Gautier 1991, 205). This reaction clearly entails a rejection of social realist writing and its view of literature as a tool, a vehicle with a message. Nevertheless, without wishing to lessen or dispute the import of Mendoza's first work, it is more than probable that its establishment as the forerunner of novels to come has much to do with the important year of its publication, providing the fortuitous and rare coincidence of literary and sociopolitical events.

In my opinion, 1970 is a year that sheds more light on post-Franco and Marías' own novelistic developments. This is the year of the publication of José-María Castellet's famous anthology of a group of poets, *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles*

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Neuschäfer 1994, Mainer 1994, Bessière 1995, Christie, Drinkwater, and Macklin 1995 (1-12), Juristo 1995, Spires 1996, Alvar 1997, Martínez Cachero 1997, and Herráez 1998.

<sup>17</sup> There are a number of studies of this novel; those of Santos Alonso (1988) and Miguel Herráez (1998, 15-43) are two of the more extensive ones.

(Castellet 1970).<sup>18</sup> The poets selected by Castellet shared a number of significant characteristics which affiliated them at that moment, one of them being their break with the dominant movement of *poesía social*, the approximate verse equivalent of the contemporary prose movement, evidenced both in their poems and their introductory poetics, and expounded on by Castellet in his introduction.<sup>19</sup>

The work of these poets is characterized by a number of features also shared by Javier Marías. First of all, it is important to bear in mind that they were all born from 1939 onwards, which meant that, unlike their predecessors, they had no first-hand experience of the Civil War. They bore witness to a change in literary taste making visible through, amongst other techniques, the related pastiche, parody, collage, and Bakhtinian carnivalization, the influence of popular and North American contemporary culture (mass media forms such as cinema, television, advertising, and comic strips), foreign literatures (especially Henry James and Marcel Proust), as well as a camp sensibility (exaggerated and self-consciously artificial and parodic aesthetic references). Through imitative forms of writing, they also introduced a certain playfulness, comic elements and laughter, creating entertaining texts, and thus rejecting the seriousness which had characterized the immediately preceding traditions. However, they rejected not only the immediate Spanish literary tradition, but virtually all of it, attesting instead

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<sup>18</sup> The anthologized poets are: Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Antonio Martínez Sarrión, José María Álvarez, Félix de Azúa, Pere Gimferrer, Vicente Molina-Foix, Guillermo Carnero, Ana María Moix, and Leopoldo María Panero.

<sup>19</sup> The publication of this anthology by Castellet was surrounded by controversy: Castellet, who had been closely aligned with and had promoted preceding literary trends, was taken to be making a public recantation in an opportunistic move and was also accused of attempting to impose a new 'aesthetic dictatorship'. However, as Sanz Villanueva argues, read dispassionately, Castellet's introduction to the book is a cautious and lucid attempt to describe, with a number of qualifications, emerging artistic trends (1991, 439). For a very elucidating account of the *novísimos* 'phenomenon' see Félix de Azúa's assessment 25 years later, in which he correctly, I think, argues that the importance they have been attributed 'no obedece a la sustancia de la obra y personalidad de sus componentes, sino a su impacto espectacular' (de Azúa 1998b, 203).

a primarily foreign literary education and foreign literary influences. They introduced foreign and exotic elements in their poems (place-names and people's names), emphasizing the work's artificiality through the contrast of the phonetic value of the foreign word with that of Castilian Spanish. In fact, their rejection of Spain was not limited to literature, but extended to all things Spanish, Spanishness, and *casticismo* – in Castellet's words they betrayed an 'horror por todo lo español' (Castellet 1970, 43).<sup>20</sup> Significantly, they also proclaimed the autonomy of the work of art, rejecting realism and mimesis and privileging form over content, as they subscribed to the belief that 'la forma del mensaje es su verdadero contenido', which, as I mentioned, was later echoed by Mendoza (Castellet 1970, 31, 34; see also de Azúa 1998b).<sup>21</sup>

All of the above elements are also characteristic, to a greater or lesser extent and in varying forms, not only of a number of novelists who, like Marías, have come to the fore from the early 1970s onwards, but also of a great many who started publishing their novels from the late 1970s onwards.<sup>22</sup> Because of this essential identity of the poetic and

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<sup>20</sup> As Vicente Molina Foix has put it 25 years later: 'Para mí, el gran defecto de la literatura española es el olor a España' (Molina Foix 1995, 70). Parodying Machado's famous expression of preoccupation with Spain, one could say these writers gave voice to a collective 'me huele España'.

<sup>21</sup> All of this earned them a lot of criticism: they were accused of being, for example, *escapistas*, *esteticistas*, or *extranjerizantes* (Benet 1973, 179, Marías 1993h, 52). This validates Matute's and Pérez-Reverte's fears I mentioned in the previous section.

<sup>22</sup> This is the case, in part because many of the poets included had already or have subsequently also written novels – Gimferrer, Molina-Foix, Vázquez Montalbán, de Azúa, Moix – thus providing a line of continuity on the one hand between the early 1970s and post-Franco novels, as well as between verse and prose writing (see Navajo 1982, Sobejano 1985, Conte 1988, 1990a, and 1990b, Lissorgues 1991b, Villanueva 1992, de la Peña 1993, Navajas 1993, Ibáñez 1994, Juristo 1995, Mainer 1995, Senabre 1995, Sanz Villanueva 1996, Nourry 1999). In any case, as Félix de Azúa maintains, it gradually became clear that most of the *novísimos* included in the anthology 'eran fundamentalmente gente de letras, y no exactamente "poetas"' (de Azúa 1998b, 202; see also 206). Incidentally, Fernando Sánchez-Dragó's talk in the 1978 Writers' Conference in Las Palmas entitled 'Contra la villana realidad' and advocating an exotic and cosmopolitan novel distanced from any realism, is, therefore, not a novel proposition since it echoes the *novísimos'* anti-mimetic, anti-realist approach to literature (see Villanueva 1992 and Acín 1990, 31-32). As Sanz Villanueva has maintained with regard to prose writing in his attempt to propose the term *generación del 68* for this group of writers who came to the fore between the late 60s and the late 70s and gave shape to the post-Franco novel, 'el fenómeno no está alejado ni es, en sustancia, distinto de la renovación de la lírica, que se presentó bajo la etiqueta de poesía novísima' (1988, 31). The idea of a 'generation of 68' does not seem to have taken hold, probably in part because it is rejected by most of the

novelistic renovation, the term *novísimos* has therefore been applied more widely to describe a number of novelists who were affiliated with the poets (for example, by Suñén 1982; Villanueva 1987, 25; Acín 1990; Masoliver Ródenas 1994, 51, and 2000).<sup>23</sup> I think this is the most appropriate term to use when referring to those novelists, since the phenomenon transcended generic boundaries and constitutes a forerunner of the literature of post-Franco writing.

Among these novelists is Javier Marías, who, in 1971 and 1972, published the two novels which are probably the most representative works of the *novísimos* (novelists) and, together with two of the writers of Castellet's anthology, Vicente Molina-Foix and Félix de Azúa, also wrote the book *Tres cuentos didácticos* (Marías et al. 1975) 'para hacer ver – antes de que cada cual tomara su propio rumbo – que la solidaridad entre los prosistas también podía encarnarse en un libro y competir en ese aspecto con la famosa antología *Nueve novísimos*' (Marías 1993h, 55).<sup>24</sup>

In an essay appropriately entitled 'Desde una novela no necesariamente castiza', Marías has subsequently outlined in greater detail the reasons underlying his and the

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22 novelists Sanz Villanueva proposes constitute it in his survey and because the persistent classification of writers according to generational phases – apart from the better-known generations of 98 and 27, under Franco there are also the so-called *generación del medio siglo* (novelists), *generación realista* (theatre), and *generación del 60* (poetry) – is perhaps not the most fruitful way of writing literary history and representing developments in the long run. Nevertheless, it has been cited, for example, by Pérez Carrera (1992) and Lanz Rivera (1994). *Generación del 70* is another name used by some – including Marías – to talk about these novelists who emerged and were closely affiliated with the *novísimos* poets and one which, like the term *novísimos*, emphasizes the emblematic value of the year (see Acín 1990, 32; Millás 1988, 51; and Marías 1993h, 51).

<sup>23</sup> The first time this term was applied to novelists was by Carlos Barral, who had also supported Castellet's *novísimos*, in his 1972 editorial launch of a series of novels, including two by a couple of the poets in Castellet's anthology, Ana María Moix and Félix de Azúa (for an entertaining and detailed account of Barral's conspicuous launch see Martínez Cachero's 'Historia de un lanzamiento editorial', 1997, 316-327).

<sup>24</sup> 'Nuestra amistad se ha cimentado en una unidad de presupuestos estéticos que dio en su momento origen a un manifiesto que se llamó *Tres cuentos didácticos*', Molina Foix has written of his affiliation with Marías and de Azúa (1995, 70). *Tres cuentos didácticos* did not rival Castellet's anthology. In fact, it has gone relatively unnoticed. It merits some critical attention though, not least from a literary-historical perspective, if only because it embodies, albeit on a much smaller scale, the prose equivalent of *Nueve novísimos*.



*novísimos*' break with Spanish literary tradition, Spain as theme, and, more generally, any form of Spanishness and *casticismo* at the time (Marías 1993h; see also de Azúa's account [1998b]).<sup>25</sup> Essentially, the reasons put forward can be reduced to a literary and a quotidian or extra-literary set. There were two related literary reasons. Firstly, he and his contemporaries felt at the time that the entire Spanish novelistic tradition up to the late 1960s was singularly uninteresting because it was relatively poor (compared to the British, French, German, Russian, or North American ones) and because it was dominated by what for them at the time constituted a singularly unattractive realism, what Nora Catelli calls 'la difícil, prolongada y fatídica relación de la narrativa española con el realismo' (1991, 139). Suñén calls this the 'doble rechazo' (1982, 7). Secondly, they were also singularly disinterested in and satiated by Spain as a theme in literature.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This rejection had in some ways already been initiated by the late Juan Benet through his 'obstinado propósito de divorcio con cualquier predecesor en lengua castellana a cuya voz pudiera considerarse enganchada la suya' (Martín Gaité 1999, 231-232). Benet was an important and pivotal literary (father-) figure, model, or reference point for Marías and many of the novelists of his generation, such as Guelbenzu, Mendoza, Millás, Pombo, Molina Foix, and de Azúa, amongst others. (On this topic see the following, for example: Bértolo 1989 and 1991; Sanz Villanueva 1991, 163-167 and 1988, 31; Fressard 1995; Martínez Cachero 1997; and de Azúa 1998a, 251-282, and 1998b, 207-208.) Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s and in his essays and articles for *Revista de Occidente*, for example, or in the collection *La inspiración y el estilo* (Benet 1973), short stories and novels (*Volverás a Región*, *Una meditación*), Benet cleared the way for them, so to speak, through his rejection of social realism and other Spanish novelistic traditions, and any form of *casticismo* and *costumbrismo* more generally – for example, see *La inspiración y el estilo* or his virulent attack on Galdós in 1970 (Benet 1996) – as well as having a significant personal impact as a friend and intellectual companion who also promoted their work and helped them get published (for example, he was responsible for the publication of Javier Marías' first novel). In this regard, the impact and significance of *La inspiración y el estilo* and its defence of the primacy of style cannot be overstated. Despite that, as García de la Concha maintains, the significance of this work has perhaps not been appreciated (1996, vii). There are many studies of Benet's work, for example, by Manteiga (1984), Vernon (1986), Pittarello (1995), or García de la Concha (1996).

<sup>26</sup> Spain as a theme, as a problem and preoccupation, constitutes a significant trait running through Spanish literature. In her *España como preocupación* (which initially appeared as *La preocupación de España en su literatura* due to the censor's objections), Dolores Franco (Javier Marías' mother) has traced it from the sixteenth to the twentieth century (Dolores Franco 1998; see also Pedro Laín Entralgo's *España como problema*, 1957). A great part of the literature of the Franco years would now also no doubt have its place in such a book. Javier Marías' own rejection of Spain as theme, and Spanishness more generally, may also have a lot to do with the fact that both his mother and, primarily, his father, Julián Marías, have displayed in their writings a constant preoccupation with Spain (for example, apart from his association with and his writings on Ortega, one has only to survey some of the latter's titles to see this preoccupation mirrored: *Los españoles*, *España inteligible*, *Cervantes*, *clave española*, *Nuestra Andalucía*,

The first extra-literary reason for their rejection is the result of their considering a number of their elders to be politically and ideologically profoundly unsympathetic and immoral figures, with Cela being probably the prime example (something which no doubt also explains the animosity that nowadays exists between Cela and many of Marías' generation of writers).<sup>27</sup> Secondly, having all been born after the end of the Civil War, not only had Marías and the rest of the *novísimos* had no direct contact with a war that had directly or indirectly stigmatized previous generations of writers and their work, but they had also not known a Spain other than Franco's Spain. The dictatorial regime, in its efforts to construct a unity and supremacy of Spanish identity, attempted to undertake an *españolización* based on patriotism and to instil a love for Spain informed by a grotesque triumphalism and 'to unify the nation by projecting difference outside its borders, or confining it to internal exclusion zones, in the form of otherness: *la anti-España* necessarily equated with foreign influence' (Labanyi 1995b, 397).<sup>28</sup> This led Marías and the *novísimos* to the perhaps simplistic yet understandable equation of Spain and Spanishness with Francoism, so that their rebellion against Franco entailed an indissociable repudiation of Spain and any Spanishness and *casticismo* through a turn to the *anti-España*, its opposite other in the form of foreignness.

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etc.). So, Javier Marías's literary reaction to Spain may also have been further fuelled by a youthful rebellion against the Father, the literary expression of a double Oedipal complex, a Freudian death-wish against the father (as father and as writer preoccupied with Spain).

<sup>27</sup> In 1938 Cela offered himself as an informer to the *Cuerpo de Investigación y Vigilancia* of the Falange as attested by a letter he addressed to that body (Cela 1996). Subsequently he also undertook work as a censor. Moreover, he was one of the writers most tolerated by the regime and actively promoted by it as a model of the 'new' national literature (Sanz Villanueva 1991, 20). As Manuel Abellán testifies in his book on literature and censorship under Franco, there are many documents in the archives of the censors demonstrating Cela's very close links with various powerful figures of the Franco regime, such as Carlos Robles Piquer, *Director General de Cultura* in the 1960s (Abellán 1980, 113-114).

<sup>28</sup> On this topic see: Valls 1986; Berrueto Albéniz 1993, esp. 355-7; Grugel 1997, 128-156; Altied 1995, and Richards 1995.

This is also why Marías and the *novísimos* rejected realism and mimetic writing and opted for anti-realist and anti-mimetic forms, namely because realism and mimesis did not offer an escape from Spanishness. Realist writing under Franco remained, as we saw, closely associated with Spanishness and, by this circuitous route, Francoism. Indeed, Marías and the *novísimos* saw these elements as part of an interrelated chain: Spain, Francoism, nation, patriotism, essentialism, Spanishness, *casticismo*, realism, mimesis, and *costumbrismo* formed the net from which they wanted to escape.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, by breaking with tradition, Marías and his generation had to start from scratch and invent their own ‘tradition’ or predecessors.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, Javier Marías’ novelistic development is defined – especially in the beginning – by running counter to the above interrelated chain of elements and can best be understood in light of this. His contribution to the break with tradition and Spanishness is very significant. His first two novels are the most extravagantly extraterritorial and imitative of foreign texts published in the early 1970s. They also foreshadow a more general trend of cosmopolitan Spanish novels set abroad which evidence the impact of foreign literatures that became widespread in the 1980s. However, what singles him out from this generation of Spanish novelists born after the Civil War is the manifold and distinctive novelistic development which attests a clear process of maturation, coupled with a preoccupation with formal and stylistic aspects of writing, without however neglecting the art of storytelling, which gives rise to a unique

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<sup>29</sup> Or, as Nora Catelli puts it, realism was equated with or connoted the other elements: ‘Para los nuevos narradores el realismo es esencia, nación, casticismo, costumbrismo’ (Catelli 1991, 140).

<sup>30</sup> The majority of the novelists among the *novísimos* and their contemporaries of the 1970s and 80s have, like the poets in Castellet’s anthology, made this quite explicit. See, for example, the testimony of Juan José Millás: ‘La mayoría de los autores españoles carecemos de tradición novelesca’ (Millás 1988, 51-52). Antonio Muñoz Molina has dedicated a whole essay on the subject suitably entitled ‘La invención de un pasado’ (1998, 204-219). Consequently, what these writers of Marías’ generation have in common is a series of rejections (Herralde speaks about the ‘refus communs’ of this generation; 1988, 38).



novelistic world. Over the following chapters, I explore this novelistic evolution as evidenced through a striking series of prominent formal and stylistic features in each novel and, where appropriate, their interrelationship with thematic aspects. I hope to show that Marías' novelistic development is extraordinarily rich and singular, and one which bears witness to the autonomy of art, as well as making an invaluable contribution to Spanish and world literature.

## Chapter I

### *Los dominios del lobo* and *Travesía del horizonte*: Progymnasmata

Javier Marías' first two novels, entitled *Los dominios del lobo* and *Travesía del horizonte*, were first published in 1971 and 1972 respectively.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see in this chapter, in line with the work of the *novísimos*, they are distinguished by the following characteristics. The two novels are instances of writings imitative of foreign texts and are therefore concomitantly: a) consciously anti-mimetic and anti-realist; b) characterized by a return to more traditional forms of storytelling; c) playfully, self-consciously, and ironically entertaining; d) extravagantly cosmopolitan in their choice of exclusively non-Spanish settings, characters, and literary and cinematic models; e) works which privilege form and style over content and, by implication, assert the autonomy of the work of art. As Nora Catelli has argued: 'No existe modo de definir la novedad de la narrativa española si no se insiste en su aspiración al dominio de sus medios' (1991, 140-141). Through their imitative nature and their exorbitant cosmopolitanism or extraterritoriality, they not only literally deviate from the Spanish orbit, wandering exclusively outwith Spanish territory, through a diverted (in both senses of the word) and diverting gaze, but they also return the novel to a more autarchic form, one independent from reality – to the social realist *engagement* they oppose a disengagement from reality and Spain – and dependent on style, reasserting the

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<sup>1</sup> The latter was in fact first published in 1973 by La Gaya Ciencia, but the official year of publication that has always been cited is the preceding one.

autonomy and the artificiality of the novel through an emphasis on form (see Suñén 1979, 21).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as instances of imitative texts, Marías' first two novels conform to the view of imitative writing as an early form of literature, as *progymnasmata*: writing in the style of another, in the beginning, can be the first stage of the writer's development of his or her own individual style.

It is in the above ways that these two works are significant in Marías' novelistic development and why this chapter focuses on their imitativeness. Their imitative nature is significant because it was a way of reacting against the contemporary Spanish literary scene, because it is Marías' way into literature, and because it attests a self-conscious emphasis on, and awareness of, the importance of form and style in his writing from the outset.

### *On imitative writing*

I use the term imitative writing to include interrelated and overlapping concepts such as parody, pastiche, homage, collage, as well as the related 'carnivalization', metafiction, inter- and hypertextuality, comedy, and *mise-en-abîme*, all of which describe, to a greater or lesser extent, these two works.<sup>3</sup> What they all have in common in literature is that they are constituted by a text consciously imitating or in some form referring to another. The differences between them seem to lie in the intentions informing the imitation (or reference) and the effects that it has. The discussions surrounding imitative writing have been lengthy and the attempts to define and classify its different forms laborious and often conflicting (see Karrer 1977, Rose 1979 and 1993, Genette 1982,

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<sup>2</sup> These are the reasons why Eduardo Mendoza has repeatedly stated he felt Marías' two first novels helped and accompanied him whilst he was writing *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta* (Mendoza 1996 and Prado 1997, 56).

<sup>3</sup> 'Imitative writing' is also the term used by Annick Bouillaguet in her book on pastiche, parody, and collage, *L'écriture imitative* (1996).

Hutcheon 1985, Kristeva 1986, Bakhtin 1988, Dane 1988, and Bouillaguet 1996).<sup>4</sup> In fact, speaking about the most widespread form of imitative writing, parody, Joseph Dane suggests that there is only ‘a consensus on what texts we call parodies’, that we do not, in fact, know the nature or essence of parody, and that a description of its hypothetical nature is not necessarily desirable (Dane 1988, 5).<sup>5</sup> He argues that the definitions of parody distort our view of the literature that we see as parodic and that ‘these words are items in a lexicon, elements of criticism, and we should not assume that the categories useful to the lexicographer and literary scholar necessarily have a corresponding phenomenon in literature’ (Dane 1988, 5). I will therefore not attempt to further define imitative writing. For the purposes of our discussion, the brief delineation I have supplied – ‘a text’s conscious imitation of another’ – will suffice and I will use some of the terms related to imitative writing only as points of departure for a discussion of the texts and not assume them as fixed concepts, although I shall refer to the aforementioned critics and theorists where appropriate. I should, however, like to highlight one or two aspects of the discussions surrounding imitative writing.

The question of whether imitative forms of writing (parody, pastiche, etc.) are ‘authentic’ forms arises in any such discussion and raises the question of ‘authenticity’ or ‘originality’ in literature as a whole: is there an ‘authentic’ or ‘original’ form of writing in the first place?<sup>6</sup> Any imitative piece of work, like Mariás’ first two, implicitly calls into question the existence of the ‘original’. As Genette has maintained, there is no

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<sup>4</sup> A good starting point to survey the discussions on imitative writing is Margaret Rose’s tracing of parody from ancient times to the present day (1993). Her summary of past theories and uses of parody (Chapter 6) gives a good overview and shows the changing and often conflicting views of parody as: comic, metafictional, critical, burlesque, lacking in originality, parasitical, double-voiced, laughter-inducing, contestatory, transgressive, insane, implying lack of mastery, repetitive, nihilistic, and intertextual, among others (Rose 1993, 279-283).

<sup>5</sup> On the blurring of the lines separating parody and pastiche see Bouillaguet (1996, 21).

<sup>6</sup> One would have to ask, as does Bouillaguet, whether this is at all possible: ‘Peut-on concevoir l’existence d’un tel *opus ex nihilo*?’ (Bouillaguet 1996, 5).

work of literature which does not to some extent imitate another (Genette 1982, 14-17).<sup>7</sup>

‘Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption or transformation of another’, Kristeva has argued, as she introduces the notion of intertextuality in her discussion of Bakhtin (Kristeva 1986, 37). All texts are thus reliant on and imitative of others. They only differ in the extent to which they are imitative. Thus, the importance of distinguishing between imitative and non-imitative literature is minimized, since all literature is imitative. I suppose what I, like Genette and those who write about imitative writing, mean by imitative literature is a literature which, like *Los dominios del lobo* and *Travesía del horizonte*, is more manifestly and explicitly – ‘plus manifestement, massivement et explicitement’ (Genette 1982, 16) – imitative.

Bouillaguet calls this ‘second-degree’ literature, a literature which is eminently reflexive, as it represents ‘la littérature (l’œuvre première, l’œuvre-cible) *par et dans* la littérature (l’œuvre seconde, l’œuvre qui parle d’une autre et tire d’elle sa substance)’,<sup>8</sup> unlike ‘first-degree’ literature which aims to represent reality (Bouillaguet 1996, 19 – my italics).<sup>9</sup> This is very significant: Marías has opted for a type of literature which, unlike social realism, and Spanish realism more generally, does not attempt to represent reality, but represents literary and cinematic texts, an imitative, reflexive, hypertextual, intertextual, metafictional literature, pointing – like all literature as discussed by Barthes in *Le degré zéro de l’écriture* – to the mediatory element in writing and shifting the

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<sup>7</sup> Genette uses here the term *hypertextuality* which he defines as either simple transformation of another text or indirect transformation, which Genette calls imitation (Genette 1982, 14). In essence, both forms of Genette’s textual transformation that make up hypertextuality are forms of imitation in that they involve forms of conscious adaptation of another text, especially in the light of his discussion of imitation on page 82.

<sup>8</sup> Thus a dialogic relationship is established between two texts (Bakhtin 1988). Genette calls the two texts *hypertext* (the secondary, imitative text) and *hypotext* (the primary, imitated text, Genette 1982, 11-12).

<sup>9</sup> This is roughly what Kristeva calls a literature of ‘the transmission of essence through form, and the configuration of (literary) space as revealing (literary) thought without “realist” pretensions’ (1986, 59).

emphasis from the *what* to the *how* (Miller 1982, 3).<sup>10</sup> Because, needless to say, imitative writing involves the imitation or imitative transformation of elements pertaining to form and style.<sup>11</sup>

By choosing an imitative form of writing to make his way into literature, Marías also forms part of a tradition in which imitation is a form of *protogymnasma*, an initial step in the artist's literary formation, and therefore an early literature. Imitation is seen as a way of developing one's own style. Indeed, for some, like Antonio Muñoz Molina, it is the only way to achieve an original style: 'La imitación entusiasta es el único camino posible hacia la originalidad' (1993, 55). Gimferrer explains in his article on Marías' first two novels that the latter has chosen to 'escribir conscientemente "a la manera de" como etapa previa a la manera individual que podrá desarrollarse más adelante' (Gimferrer 1973, 34). Many of the *novísimos* and post-Franco novelists started out, like their counterparts in poetry, by writing imitative works: Mendoza's first novel is a pastiche of various genres; Félix de Azúa's first novel, *Las lecciones de Jena* (1972), is a pastiche of German Romantic literature (Domingo 1973, 6); Soledad Puértolas pays homage to Chandler in her first work, *El bandido doblemente armado* (1980); and Paloma Díaz-Mas has admitted to starting her own writing career in the late 1960s by writing short stories copying Borges' style and has also affirmed that this was quite commonplace among her generation as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> As Genette argues, imitation involves an indispensable mediation (1982, 13).

<sup>11</sup> This is the point that Bakhtin makes when he says that the 'true hero' of the parodic work *Batrachomyomachia* (a parody of the Homeric epic poem) is style (1988, 133). See also Genette (1982, 82-92), Bouillaguet (1996), and Rose's discussion of pastiche as a 'borrowed style' (1993, 75).

<sup>12</sup> Comments made at the Fourth Symposium on Contemporary Spanish Narrative ('History and personal history in contemporary Spanish narrative'), University of Leeds, 9 May 1998. Incidentally, Díaz-Mas' second novel, *El sueño de Venecia* (1992) is also an example of a more developed form of imitative writing in its pastiche of literary styles pertaining to literary conventions of different eras. On the imitativeness and intertextuality of contemporary Spanish fiction see Felten and Prill (1995a).

## I. Writing the adventure

*Los dominios del lobo* was first published in 1971.<sup>13</sup> Marías wrote the novel when he was 17 years old.<sup>14</sup> As far as I am aware, it is the first ever ‘foreign’ Spanish novel, that is to say, a novel not set in Spain and not populated by any Spanish characters: it is set in the U.S.A. and all its characters are American. (This literary cosmopolitanism, foreshadowed by the *novísimos* and by Marías’ first two novels in particular, became a more widespread phenomenon in the 1980s, when many Spanish novels were set abroad.)<sup>15</sup> The USA which he set out to write about was, as he explains in the preface to the 1987 edition of the novel, not the ‘real’ one: in the tradition of imitative writing, it was a ‘mediated’ America, the America represented in 1930s, 40s, and 50s Hollywood cinema.<sup>16</sup> For that purpose, he went to Paris in June 1969 for a month and a half, because he was aware that there Henri Langlois’ famous *Cinémathèque Française* and a number of other cinemas or *studios* were dedicated to screening constantly what was to become his *hypotext*, American films of that era (Marías 1987a, 7-8).<sup>17</sup> Thus, Marías’

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<sup>13</sup> Vicente Molina Foix suggested the title to the young Marías and, subsequently, Benet ensured its publication. All references to the novel are to its 1987 Anagrama edition, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>14</sup> See the preface to the novel (Marías 1987a).

<sup>15</sup> Nowadays, there is nothing unusual about Spanish novels set abroad. For example, there are novels exclusively set abroad: Jesús Ferrero’s *Bélver Yin* (1981) is set in China, Puértolas’ *Burdeos* (1986) in Bordeaux (both of them without any Spanish characters), and Mendoza’s *La isla inaudita* (1989) in Venice. Then there are those that are set in a kind of no-man’s-land, a place impossible to identify conclusively: Puértolas’ *El bandido doblemente armado* (1980) and Marías’ *El siglo* (1981) are two such novels. Finally, there are a great many novels whose settings combine Spanish locations with foreign ones, like Muñoz Molina’s *El invierno en Lisboa* (1987) – San Sebastián, Madrid, Lisbon, Berlin – or *Beltenebros* (1989) – Madrid, London, Florence – Arturo Pérez-Reverte’s *El club Dumas* (1992) – Madrid, Portugal, Paris – or Puértolas’ *Queda la noche* (1989) – Spain, India.

<sup>16</sup> And, to a lesser extent, it was also the America reflected in the work of some North American writers (1987a, 7-12); ‘Esa América retratada no se pretende real, sino que es una divertida parodia y, a la vez, un homenaje al cine de los años dorados de Hollywood y – en palabras del propio Javier Marías – “a una indiscriminada serie de escritores norteamericanos que había ido leyendo sin orden, concierto ni respeto y que incluía desde un Faulkner visto con ojos folklóricos hasta John O’Hara, desde un Hammett indisociable del rostro de Humphrey Bogart hasta la sombría Flannery O’Connor, desde un Melville sin ningún simbolismo hasta el novelista lógico-policíaco S. S. Van Dine”’, we are informed on the back cover (1987a).

<sup>17</sup> The *Cinémathèque Française* was founded in 1936 by Henri Langlois and Georges Franjou. It was a film archive and public theatre aimed at promoting the study of cinema. Today it is the largest public film



literary flight from Spain was accompanied by a literal one. Paris was probably unique in the world at the time, since there, as was the case with the *nouvelle vague* filmmakers, one could be exposed to such films to that degree. Thus, paradoxically, Marías' subject matter, his America, was most 'real' and alive in Paris, France. There he would develop what Genette calls the partial mastery required to imitate a text with the characteristics that have been chosen for imitation, in this case cinematic narratives (Genette 1982, 13).<sup>18</sup>

The action of the novel, which is divided into 11 loosely connected episodes,<sup>19</sup> consists of a series of stories and adventures which span the entire United States of America, from the east coast (New York) to the west coast (San Francisco, Los Angeles), from the far north (Minnesota) through the Midwest (Chicago) to the Deep South (Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama).<sup>20</sup> The period of time covered by the novel is 101 years, from 1861 to 1962. However, unlike *Cien años de soledad*, although time unfolds chronologically within each episode, their sequence is not in chronological or any other order.<sup>21</sup> Thus, there is temporal and spatial unity within each episode, all

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archive in the world. Langlois and his *Cinémathèque* had a profound impact on cinema study and culture, especially after the end of the Second World War. Apart from Marías and many other *cinéphiles*, Langlois educated an entire generation of French film theorists and directors, among them François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, and Claude Chabrol, who were the main representatives of French New Wave cinema from 1959 onwards and whose cinematic 'staple diet', like Marías', was also, to a large extent, postwar Hollywood cinema with often similar results, as we shall see below.

<sup>18</sup> During his stay in Paris Marías recalls he watched 85 films (Marías 1987a, 10).

<sup>19</sup> The episodes or chapters are untitled and in order to avoid any confusion I will give the page numbers of each: episode one, 17-32, two, 33-49, three, 50-71, four, 72-79, five, 80-94, six, 95-130, seven, 131-161, eight, 161-167, nine, 168-189, ten, 190-194, eleven, 195-235. The division between episodes six, seven, and eight is ambiguous and only the result of interpretation; it becomes clear at the end of episode seven that the story it contained was a film in which the main characters of episodes six and eight, who are the same (the film stars Glenda Greeves and Arthur Taeger), were the actors. So, it could be argued that episodes six, seven, and eight are in fact not three different ones, but one and the same. However, and although eight is a chronological continuation of six, I treat them as relatively separate episodes because their storylines differ.

<sup>20</sup> Many of the episodes are set in the Deep South and seem thus to be vaguely alluding to Faulkner.

<sup>21</sup> The action of each episode takes place in a matter of hours (episodes 4 and 8), days (3, 5, 10, and 11), weeks (2 and 7), months (6), or years (1 and 9).



eleven of which can, as a consequence, be read as self-contained short stories, but not within the novel as a whole. These relatively independent episodes interweave and become gradually interrelated through the reappearance of characters in most of the stories. The Taeger brothers, Osgood Perkins, and Terence Barr reappear in one or more episodes and thus connect, albeit tangentially, the various storylines. However, these connections do not form one coherent and linear narrative. Rather, as they are of a casual and not causal nature, they emphasize the fragmentariness of the novel and they highlight the role of chance in the unfolding of the various storylines, as well as pointing to a latent interconnectedness underlying life, an interconnectedness which gradually becomes increasingly all-encompassing throughout Mariás' novelistic evolution, culminating in his last novel, as we shall see in Chapter VI. Furthermore, the connections are not made explicit by the author or the narrator: the casual and relatively latent nature of the interconnectedness of the narrative means that it is the reader who is invited to effect the links, thus becoming a participant in constructing and completing the narrative.

The novel to some extent bears witness to a youthful fascination with adventures, the same fascination that his contemporary, the philosopher and, therefore arguably, *novísimo* writer, Fernando Savater, talks about in his book *La infancia recuperada*, first published in 1976 (Savater 1994). *Los dominios del lobo* is thus a recovery of the childhood enchantment with adventures. This, in part, explains why the instances of relative violence and cruelty of the action have playful and comic rather than serious effects; the author does not attempt to moralize nor does he wish to impose a view or a message on the reader. The third person semi-omniscient narrative is recounted from the point of view of the protagonists and is devoid of any authorial commentary and replete

with dialogue, thus avoiding any explicit authorial assessment of the action other than that of the characters. The storytelling is freed from any constraint and invites the reader on a journey into another world. Elide Pittarello sums it up as follows:

Poblados más de fieras que de personas, *Los dominios del lobo* enmarcan así una jungla urbana que le permite al lector español no sentirse involucrado en ninguna situación concreta y gozar de un desarraigo ilusorio y aventurero. Todo pasa al otro lado del océano: es como un juego y no necesita explicación. (Pittarello 1996, 12)

However, this narrative of adventures also bespeaks an awareness of their fictional nature, their literariness (a language reflecting on itself), as they accommodate an implicit metacommentary about the adventure (and pleasure) of storytelling.<sup>22</sup>

*Los dominios del lobo* is a novel essentially imitating Hollywood film genres of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s: the action-packed storylines involving playful, witty, and entertaining tales of gangsters and gangster warfare and rivalry, prisoners, hidden money, murder, blackmail, racketeering, corruption, double-crossing, friendship, love, sex, and greed are pastiches of comedies, melodramas, and especially gangster movies and *films noirs* of those three decades. The imitation is the result of identifying and generalizing the idiolect of these cinematic genres, borrowing their stylistic and thematic, that is to say their generic language or code, which Genette explains is the reason why one can only speak of indirect, stylistic imitation (Genette 1982, 90-91). The idiolect of those films becomes the somewhat indiscriminate matrix of imitation.

For example, the tale of the collapse of the Taeger family of Pittsburgh in episode one, and the life of crime to which most of its members succumb, contains echoes of melodramas such as *The magnificent Ambersons* (1942), *Cat on a hot tin roof* (1942), *Written on the wind* (1956), gangster films like *The brothers Rico* (1957) or *The*

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<sup>22</sup> On this point see Savater's defence of the supreme importance of storytelling (Savater 1979).

*Bonnie Parker story* (1958), or Hitchcock's *Shadow of a doubt* (1943), although the tone of Mariás' narrative is lighter and often comical. Episodes two, five, nine, and ten, the stories revolving around Osgood Perkins, his crime and time in prison and a hidden treasure, echo adventure films such as *The treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948) and *Rope of sand* (1949), as well as the comedy drama *The big steal* (1949). Episode four, which recounts Milt Taeger's arrival in Chicago in 1934, when he kills the second-in-command of one of the two rival gangsters vying for supremacy in the city during Prohibition, and episode ten, set in New York in 1936, where his eventual rise to gangster fame is confirmed, echoes gangster movies about public enemies of the Prohibition and Depression eras, like *Little Caesar* (1930), *The public enemy* (1931), *Scarface* (1932), *White heat* (1949), or *Baby face Nelson* (1957).<sup>23</sup> In fact, episode three contains an explicitly intertextual reference to the star of *White heat* and the embodiment of the cinematic gangster, James Cagney. When the composer Terence Barr, who has undertaken to blackmail his employer, is asked by the latter how much money he wants, his reaction is described thus: 'A Barr le encantó aquella pregunta. Se sentía importante y jamescagney. Intentó poner cara de duro y contestó secamente' (61 – my italics). The adjective is obviously a neologism. It encapsulates the parodic and playful nature of the novel: Barr, evidently self-conscious about the acting he is doing ('intentó poner cara de duro') in his newly-adopted role as blackmailer, emulates the archetypal tough guy and is described by way of a mediatory, cinematic, and artificial adjective which draws attention to the intertextual or hypertextual nature of the text. Episode eleven, the melodramatic story of private investigator Andy Robbins and his attempt to save the

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<sup>23</sup> Although an inconsequential mistake, the Prohibition, the period during which the manufacture and sale of alcohol was banned in the US, was in effect from 1920 to 1933 and therefore episode four, which claims to be taking place during Prohibition, is in fact set in the year after its end. The mistake is not serious; indeed, it emphasizes the non-realist pretension of the book and the fact that its sources are films which can contribute to obscuring or falsifying reality.

sweetheart of the gangster Milt Taeger, imitates gangster films and murder mysteries like *Laura* (1944).

*White heat* (1949) is a gangster film which is also considered to be a prototypical *film noir* and *Los dominios del lobo* also bears the marks of this other postwar American genre. So, for example, some of the women, like Virginia Wainscott (episode seven) or Susan Bedford (episodes six and seven), are typical *femmes fatales*, cunning and sensuous women who seduce men for their own selfish ends, often leading the men to distress or bringing about their downfall. The *femme fatale* was very prevalent in *films noirs* of the 1930s and 40s, which were pervaded by a mood of darkness, cynicism, and often despair. Indeed, this dark atmosphere, the moral chaos and the corruption of all human values, is the main characteristic of *film noir* (Cook 1990, 467-471) and is also, albeit in a more playful and parodic tone, reflected in Mariás' first novel, which is populated not only by *femmes fatales*, but also by other *film noir* antiheroes, such as the down-at-the-heel private eye (Mike Robbins, episode eleven), the ruthless blackmailer (Terence Barr, episode three), the con-man (Wes McMullan, episode seven), and the racketeer or gangster (Milt Taeger, episodes four and ten). The slightly 'dark' episode seven in particular, with its tale of corruption, murder, false incrimination, and duplicity perpetrated by an unfaithful wife and her lover, an ex-convict who joins the rural household as a handyman, with a view to appropriating the husband's fortune, is a very explicit and ironic imitation of two archetypal *films noirs*: *Double indemnity* (1944), in which an insurance agent connives with the glamorous wife of a client to kill her husband and collect, and, more especially, *The postman always rings twice* (1946), which tells the story of a guilty couple – the lover is a handyman – who murder the husband, but get their 'come-uppance'. Indeed, like episode seven, most of the other

episodes present us with characters who are most often villainous heroes or antiheroes, but who are nevertheless relatively likeable and with whom the reader is not discouraged to identify, introducing a moral ambiguity and chaos popularized by *film noir* (Cook 1990, 467-471).<sup>24</sup> The atmosphere of the novel as a whole also recalls other *film noirs* such as *The big sleep* (1946) or the suspenseful *Gaslight* (1944), as well as the melodramas *Rage in Heaven* (1941) or *This gun for hire* (1941).

Marías' novel is thus an imitative recreation of such Hollywood narratives through a rewriting of postwar genres, with which it enters into what Bakhtin calls a 'dialogic' relationship (Bakhtin 1988). Fiction is thus shown to be the result of an intertextual synthesis of texts. This highlights the text's literariness, the fact that it is a formal artifice, which Hutcheon has argued is one of the effects of imitative writing (Hutcheon 1985, 31).

The other way for a text to point to its literariness is through metafictional elements, such as 'a self-reflecting mirror', another name for *mise-en-abîme* (Hutcheon 1985, 31) and of this there are two concrete and very significant instances in *Los*

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<sup>24</sup> *Film noir* and American films of the 30s, 40s, and 50s were also in great part the 'staple diet' on which the filmmakers or *auteurs* of the French New Wave were educated in film and parallels can thus be drawn between their work and *Los dominios del lobo*. Their films also draw attention to the fact that they are consciously crafted products of the imagination and imitative of other texts (films), rather than unmediated reflections of reality, by establishing a distance between the audience and the film. By calling attention to their artificially created nature, primarily through the camerawork, the editing, and the acting, New Wave films, like Marías' novel, remind us that we are watching a film and not a reality which the film may resemble. One of the most well-known and characteristic films of the French New Wave is Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1959). I have mentioned how Marías' novel forces the reader to participate in the creation of the story by making the connections in the spatially and temporally fragmented main narrative, and Godard's film does the same: it highlights spatial and temporal discontinuity through its elliptical editing (sections of single continuous shots are edited out producing so-called jump cuts which force the viewer to make the connections). Like Marías' novel, Godard's film is also a parody of and homage to gangster films. Jean-Paul Belmondo plays a young criminal who is finally double-crossed by the *femme fatale* played by Jean Seberg. Interestingly, Michel (Belmondo's character) has the habit of stroking his lips with his thumb, often with a cigarette in his hand. This is an allusion to and an ironic imitation of Humphrey Bogart who used to do the same in many gangster and *noir* films. This gesture has thus the equivalent parodic effect to that of the adjective describing Terence Barr as feeling *jamescagney* – only in this case Michel feels *humphreybogart*.

*dominios del lobo*. The aforementioned episode seven of the novel, as its last paragraph reveals, suddenly turns out to be a film whose stars are the main characters of episodes six and eight, the screen actors Arthur Taeger and Glenda Reeves:

‘Sí. Y debemos trabajar esas tierras y esos bosques que ahora son nuestros.’ Y volvió a sonreír, esta vez abiertamente. La pareja se alejó por la carretera. La música sonó muy alta y sobre la pantalla se vio la palabra Fin. La sala se llenó de los aplausos del público y de gritos que reclamaban la presencia de los autores de la película. (161-162)

The reader is surprised and forced to recognize that the text he or she was reading up to that point was not what he or she thought it was. The story – episode seven – within the main narrative has suddenly become a film within the story about the two Hollywood actors of episodes six and eight. This is taken even further when the entire novel turns out to have been a film, as its very last sentence makes apparent: ‘Mientras Herb Rowe hablaba, hubo un movimiento de cámara hacia una ventana y se vieron los rascacielos’ (235). Consequently, the last sentence introduces a new frame around the whole novel and an added distance between reader and text, making the reader very aware of the artificial nature of the fiction, its literariness, as well as pointing to the hypertextual form – cinema – the novel mimics. Episode seven is a film framed by a narrative which also turns out to be a film, which, in turn, is also a novel (*Los dominios del lobo*) in its turn imitating American films. (This chain of imitative writings could, of course, be extended to show that many of the films imitated are themselves reworkings of other texts, like *Double indemnity*, for example, with a script by novelist Raymond Chandler based on James M. Cain’s novel, in turn influenced by Hammett’s work, and so on). The result of imitative writing is that ‘narrative is presented as only narrative, as its own reality – that is, as artifice’ (Hutcheon 1985, 31).



It may already have become obvious that another element that contributes to the artificiality, fictionality, and anti-realism of the text is the use of American names. The place-names already have an almost mythical or unreal quality because the average reader is acquainted with them through films or novels. Chicago or Los Angeles, New Orleans or Mississippi, connote more than just the concrete realities they denote. The names of the various characters have similar effects and Marías seems to take great pleasure in introducing as many of them as possible, often gratuitously, since many of these names are only mentioned once and are of no significance to the story whatsoever. Exactly like the foreign names used by the *novísimos* poets in their works, they are, on the one hand, artificial references with an aesthetic value and, on the other hand, significant in terms of their phonetic value in that, together with the place names, they contribute to the creation of an America which is in some ways more American than the real one, a mediated, intertextual America that is extravagantly American, because it has a heightened awareness of its Americanness. ‘Wes McMullen’, ‘Templeton O’Hara’, ‘Virginia Wainscott’ or ‘Kent Sheiner’ do not only have an unreal ring to them, as well as a strong connotative value (evoking, for example, film actors like Fred McMurray, Shirley Temple, or Maureen O’Hara), but, like the place names and like Marías’ entire America, they leap off the page because they stand in some contrast to the Spanish language in which they are introduced, thus becoming a constant reminder of the rejection of Spanishness, as well as an element of defamiliarization (Shklovsky 1988).

In this first novel, Marías’ Spanish is very plain and uncomplicated, probably a result of attempting to imitate cinematic genres. The sentences are very short and not very descriptive, few adjectives are used, and the novel contains a lot of direct speech. Indeed, his style as a whole stands in stark contrast with that of his next novel, which



takes the consciously imitative anti-realist approach, rejective of any Spanishness, as well as the playful, self-conscious storytelling, and the consequent privileging of form and style over content, a step further. Consequently, like his first novel, his second also implicitly asserts the autonomy of the work of art.

## II. *The adventure of writing*

Javier Marías did not leave Spain to write his second novel, *Travesía del horizonte*.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, it is, again, a narrative exclusively set abroad and wholly inhabited by non-Spanish characters. It is his second ‘foreign’ novel after *Los dominios del lobo* and, like the latter, it bears witness to his disengagement with Spain and Spanishness, realism, mimesis, and ‘seriousness’. The rejection of Spanishness in all its forms and the ensuing adoption of foreign traditions meant that his second novel is also characterized by a profound cosmopolitanism and is again a text imitative of non-Spanish narratives.

However, unlike his first novel, the models are exclusively literary and British rather than American: Joseph Conrad, Henry James, and, to a lesser extent, Arthur Conan Doyle are the three novelists imitated.<sup>26</sup> It is significant that not only are all three Edwardian novelists, but Conrad and James are also arguably the two most important innovators of the modern novel of their time. Both had an acute awareness of formal aspects of writing and were very particular, accomplished, and ingenious stylists. It is not surprising, then, that *Travesía del horizonte* consists of a more elaborate narrative structure than *Los dominios del lobo* and that Marías’ style is more intricate and his

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<sup>25</sup> Javier Marías began writing *Travesía del horizonte* in the summer of 1971 and finished it in September 1972. It was published the following year, although its official date of publication is 1972. I will be referring to the 1988 Anagrama edition throughout, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>26</sup> Strictly speaking, Conan Doyle is the only British novelist of the three; as is well known, having been born in the United States before moving to Europe, James is also considered an American novelist and Conrad was a Pole, before, like James, becoming a naturalized British citizen.

language richer, mimicking the Edwardian novelists, and James in particular. For example, adjectives are now used much more frequently, the sentences are significantly longer, and subordinate clauses often grow to such an extent that they almost become ‘insubordinate’ clauses.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, with Gimferrer, one could speak of the *foreignness* of Marías style in this second novel.<sup>28</sup>

This is partly because, as we will see for ourselves and as Marías himself has recognized elsewhere, the imitation is more pronounced in this novel (1993h, 52). As a consequence, it is also more self-reflective than his first work. That is to say, the novel contains within itself a commentary on its own status as fiction and, by implication, on the process of the production (writing) and reception (reading) of fiction in general. Linda Hutcheon has discussed this literary phenomenon of self-reflectiveness at length (Hutcheon 1984).<sup>29</sup> She calls these narratives which draw attention to their own fictional and artificial nature and which are thus, to a greater or lesser extent, fictions about fictions, ‘narcissistic’, after the Greek myth of Narcissus and in conjunction with Freud’s psychoanalytical re-reading of that myth. According to her, metafiction is an exemplification of cultural forms which have become known under the term ‘postmodernism’ and were becoming very common in the 1960s, although, as she

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<sup>27</sup> The opening sentence alone sets the tone: ‘Al ser mencionada cierta persona que, según uno de los asistentes, había muerto en bancarrota a causa de su desmedido amor por la pintura después de haber gozado durante muchos años de una posición de privilegio, un caballero, cuyo nombre no había podido captar dos horas antes, cuando me había sido presentado, comentó con pesadumbre el reciente fin en parecidas circunstancias de un buen amigo suyo que había dedicado su vida y su fortuna a tratar de averiguar los motivos que habían impulsado a Victor Arledge, en su primera madurez, a abandonar la literatura y refugiarse en la mansión de un lejano pariente escocés, donde había fallecido tres años más tarde, a la edad de treinta y ocho’ (17). Note, incidentally, the absence of an accent on the *i* of *Victor*, as Marías opts instead for the foreign spelling, an indication of the extent of the rejection of any form of Spanishness, including that of Spanish spelling, if afforded the opportunity. The only Spanish element of the novel is the language used, and that, too, primarily through syntax and word choice, is made to read more like English.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Lo que singulariza a *Travesía del horizonte* es, por una parte, el voluntario anacronismo y extranjería de su estilo y sus temas’ (Gimferrer 1973, 34).

<sup>29</sup> On a discussion of contemporary Spanish metafiction see Sobejano (1989).

recognises, metafiction had already been part and parcel of fiction and the novel in particular (Hutcheon 1984). Therefore, one cannot argue that it is an exclusively contemporary phenomenon. Rather, the fiction's awareness and conscious and deliberate acknowledgment of its own processes of creation and reception within the work itself seem to be an essential part of any fiction. Hence, they can be traced back to Cervantes' *Don Quijote* or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

Be that as it may, it is important to recognize that Marías was already becoming a more self-conscious and proficient writer, as his prominent imitative writing and its concomitant self-reflectiveness or metafictionality reveal. As we ascertained, *Los dominios del lobo* also drew attention to its fictional nature through its imitative intertextuality and its chain of stories which, at times, contained another story or film. The same occurs in *Travesía del horizonte*, only this time the process of embedding, of setting one narrative sequence within another, is significantly more pronounced and developed. The narrative of his second novel is made up of narratives containing other narratives, that is to say, it is a specular narrative or a *mise-en-abîme*.<sup>30</sup>

In many ways, *Travesía del horizonte* is the story of a reading: the primary or frame narrative is the reading of a manuscript and the events surrounding the reading. The story told in the manuscript is the second or second-degree narrative.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the title of this manuscript is identical to the title of Marías' novel but for the addition of

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<sup>30</sup> The term used to describe this process of disappearing repetition was initially introduced by André Gide (he uses the spelling 'abyeme', although the above is the current spelling). As Hutcheon points out, Gide's use of the term originates in 'the heraldic image of an escutcheon bearing in its centre a miniature replica of itself' (Hutcheon 1984, 55). Lucien Dällenbach's *Le récit spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme* is a full length study of this literary phenomenon (1977).

<sup>31</sup> A 'narrative in the second degree' is a term used by Gérard Genette in his discussion of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Genette 1980, 228). He also uses the term 'metanarrative' to mean the same. However, to avoid any possible confusion, I will not use this term. Normally, in philosophy and literary theory metalanguage is a language which is employed to speak about another language. Following this logic, metanarrative should then be the frame or primary narrative. However, Genette reverses this and uses metanarrative as a synonym for second-degree narrative.

the definite article: *La travesía del horizonte*. The duplication of the title has a mirror-like, specular effect, which is an instance of the effect the entire novel has on the reader.

The novel is divided into eight chapters. The frame narrative has strong echoes of some of Henry James' short stories or novellas. It introduces us, in the second chapter, to three characters who meet around 1910 and gather in Mr Branshaw's house where he begins to read to them an unpublished manuscript written by a late friend of his. This friend, called Ellis, spent his life and his fortune attempting to discover the reasons that had driven a famous author, Victor Arledge, to abandon literature and to take refuge in a mansion in Scotland. According to the narrator's account of Mr Branshaw's relation of events, Ellis acquired sufficient information with which to construct an ambiguous story surrounding Arledge, although he never managed to establish with certainty all the causes that led to Arledge's premature renouncement of literature and his subsequent death (18).

Before the first reading in Branshaw's library, Miss Bunnage mysteriously alludes to certain secrets surrounding the manuscript. Branshaw commences the reading of Ellis' *La travesía del horizonte*, which constitutes the second-degree narrative (or first inset narrative). After the first reading Miss Bunnage promises to tell the narrator 'the truth' regarding this whole matter (85). These remarks intrigue the narrator and his interest in the novel becomes 'agudo y tentador' (86). The next morning the narrator returns to Branshaw's house, but, inexplicably, Miss Bunnage does not appear and Branshaw completes the reading without her. The narrator has become obsessed by the novel and the unresolved mysteries it contains and sets off to look for Miss Bunnage, only to find that she had died of a heart attack the previous night. Two years later the narrator discovers a folder belonging to Miss Bunnage, containing various letters and

notes and four pages hand-written in the first person. In the last sentence of the frame narrative, and of Marías' novel, we are left in uncertainty, as the narrator prefers not to reveal to us his conclusions: 'Saqué mis conclusiones, pero me quedé con la convicción de que ella había sabido mucho más acerca de *La travesía del horizonte* de lo que aquellas cuatro páginas delataban' (202).

This first-degree narrative is ambiguous and shrouded in uncertainty, as is its resolution of the secret it contains and to which it constantly alludes. This, for example, is the case in *The lesson of the master* and is also characteristic of others of Henry James' longer short stories (Swan 1963, 71-134). In particular, Marías' second novel strongly echoes James' *The Aspern papers* (James 1963), which introduces us to a first person narrator who, like the narrators of Marías' first- and second-degree narratives, becomes increasingly curious, to the point of obsession, in his quest to discover a deceased writer's papers and the secrets they contain, papers which are in the possession of a Miss Bordereau (note the similarities of the names of those in possession of a secret in James' and Marías' stories), whose past relationship with the writer is also shrouded in a mystery which remains unresolved when she finally dies and her daughter burns the papers.

Marías' second-degree narrative, that of Ellis' manuscript, also contains many of these Jamesian elements. The protagonist of *La travesía del horizonte* is the novelist Victor Arledge who, in 1904, decides to embark on a maritime voyage to the South Pole. He does so not because of the promise of adventure, but because his curiosity has been aroused by an incident involving Hugh Everett Bayham and recounted to him in a letter by a friend. The story is of Bayham's mysterious four-day disappearance. According to Bayham's own uncertain account of events, he was kidnapped and taken to Scotland and

then returned to London. Since Bayham is joining the party on the *Tallahassee* – the name of the steamboat, bearing the name of the capital of the state of Florida, alludes to the world of the Deep South left behind in *Los dominios del lobo*<sup>32</sup> – Arledge decides to join the crossing to find out what really happened to Bayham. The story of the kidnapping is shrouded in mystery and leaves unanswered many questions which fuel Arledge's curiosity and his desire to meet him. Significantly, the story of the kidnapping imitates the beginnings of most of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes adventures, which start with precisely such seemingly bizarre and inexplicable events.

In his unsuccessful attempts to unveil the secret, Arledge's desire to know the secret becomes an obsession and his curiosity a disorder. However, although we are told that Bayham eventually reveals the secret to Arledge, the mystery is never unveiled to the reader. Hence, like the frame narrative, the second-degree narrative remains ambiguous. The latter also perpetuates the *mise-en-abîme* through the multiple-framed narrative of Bayham's kidnapping and, indeed, by the fact that the story is a second-hand account of events.

This second-degree narrative strongly echoes some of Joseph Conrad's novels, especially in terms of its storylines. Many of Conrad's novels revolve around maritime adventures and Conrad himself was a seaman before he became a writer. Thus, the response of men to danger, stress, and crisis was a constant theme in his work and is also prevalent in the adventures of the *Tallahassee*'s captain, which he recounts to Arledge. His tale of his past occupies an entire chapter and constitutes yet another instance of a specular narrative. His story is thus a third-degree narrative, since it is embedded in the

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<sup>32</sup> There is another implicit reference to *Los dominios del lobo*: in *Travesía del horizonte* one of the characters stays at the Cleveland Hotel in Amoy (130) and in the previous novel various characters stay at one of the three Cleveland hotels in different U.S. cities: San Francisco, Baltimore, and Chicago (Marías 1987a, 57, 101, and 235). Thus the Cleveland not only provides a link, albeit marginal, for the stories within the first novel, but also becomes an intertextual reference in its reappearance in the second.



second-degree narrative, which is in turn contained within the frame narrative of its reading. Like Conrad's characters in *Almayer's folly* and *An outcast of the islands* (Conrad 1994 and 1992), the captain's adventures centre around a remote trading station in an exotic location in South East Asia and revolve around characters obsessed by dreams of prosperity and their failures (his trading station is in Amoy, South East China, and Conrad's two novels are set in Borneo).

The adventure which the passengers of the *Tallahassee* seek in Mariás' second-degree narrative eludes them. Their journey is cut short and not only do they not reach the South Pole, but most passengers disembark in Tangiers after managing only a cruise around the Mediterranean, 'el más familiar de los mares' (Pittarello 1996, 13). Thus, their conscious quest for an adventure fails, as it was indeed bound to, since, according to Conrad, anyone who deliberately sets out to find adventure will be disappointed; 'No adventure came to one for asking. He who starts on a deliberate quest of an adventure goes forth but to gather Dead-Sea fruit' (Conrad 1988, 155). In as far as the frustrated quest for adventure is concerned, Mariás' novel is a parodic unmasking of the fallacy of adventure stories, especially since the only real or classical adventures – the ones experienced by the ship's captain – are mediated by at least two frames of narration (he tells Arledge, they are then related in the manuscript, which is read to the first person narrator, who then tells the reader).<sup>33</sup>

Seen in this light, *Travesía del horizonte* is an adventure novel at the same time as it is a parody of one. The mediation introduced by the various frames, as was the case, to a lesser extent, in *Los dominios del lobo*, distances the story's content from its own referential certainty and invites the recognition of a literary form that mediates any

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<sup>33</sup> However, in an essay on adventure and adventure stories, Mariás argues that even the failure to find adventure is characteristic of adventure stories (Mariás 1979).



representation, that is to say, an acknowledgment that a novel can never be an unmediated representation of anything, not least because its language is not only a mere vehicle or means, but a medium in its full sense, a substance that stands between two things and not only links them, but also intervenes or mediates.<sup>34</sup>

We have noted the influence of Conrad, Conan Doyle, and Henry James. Marías' reliance on the latter's work is also evident in a more formal aspect in his second novel. James was a master of ambiguity and it is quite clear that Marías' narrative technique in his second novel is imitative of James' and, in particular, that employed in one of his most accomplished and uncanny stories: *The turn of the screw* (James 1993). A comparison of the two will shed further light on the imitative nature of Marías' work.

The plot of James' tale is well known: a young woman is employed as a governess by an uncle of two children who live in a country house owned by him but from which he is absent. The governess seems to see two apparitions, which she takes to be the ghosts of a former valet of the house and her predecessor, beckoning the children. In her attempts to 'save' the children – who she thinks are aware of and drawn to the ghosts behind a façade of perfect innocence – from the ghosts, she makes the little girl ill and, in an effort to get the boy to confess, she inadvertently kills him in her tight grasp.

The question regarding the governess' madness or sanity – whether she is merely suffering from neurosis or whether she in fact does see ghosts – has led to lengthy critical debates (see Willen 1969 and Felman 1982a). James' astutely ambiguous construction of the story invites both readings and thus makes the issue uncertain. More importantly from our point of view, the process of creating uncertainty starts at the beginning of the novel with a narrative which frames the events at the country house.

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<sup>34</sup> In this sense, then, Marías is a descendant of Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, although this is the only, and very general, link which both of his novels have with any Spanish tradition.

Hence, as in Mariás' novel, we have a primary narrative which frames the others. Both novels also have three narrators: a first person nameless narrator who tells us the story with which he had no direct contact; a reader – Douglas (*The turn of the screw*) and Branshaw (*Travesía del horizonte*) – who reads the story to others from a manuscript written by another person (in both cases, the manuscripts bear the same names as the novels themselves, although in Mariás' case a definite article slightly differentiates the two); and the governess and Ellis who wrote the stories down (in James' case the governess doubles as protagonist and writer of her story, whereas the protagonist of Ellis' story is Arledge).

But what do these multiple frames and narrators mean? What is their significance? In both cases it is the same and it is succinctly summed up in one critic's discussion of James' novel. In an essay entitled 'Turning the screw of interpretation', Shoshana Felman analyzes the interrelationship of literature and psychoanalysis based on a reading of *The turn of the screw* and of so-called Freudian readings that have been undertaken of that text (Felman 1982a). She argues that one of the effects of the multiple framing is the loss of the story's origin through an echoing chain of multiple narrative voices:

The existence of the story is thus assured only through the constitution of a *narrative chain*, in which the narrators relay the story from one to the other. The story's origin is therefore not assigned to any one voice which would assume responsibility for the tale, but to the deferred action of a sort of *echoing effect*, produced – 'after the fact' – by voices which themselves reproduce previous voices. It is as though the frame itself could only multiply *itself*, repeat itself: as though, in its infinite reproduction of the very act of narration, the frame could only be its own self-repetition, its own self-framing. (Felman 1982a, 121)<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> What Felman is describing here is essentially what Hutcheon calls metafictional, self-reflective, or narcissistic narrative (Hutcheon 1984).

Thus, in *Travesía del horizonte*, more forcefully than in *The turn of the screw* because of the existence of even more embedded narratives, the various frames point not to the story's origin, but to its loss, its infinite deferral through another frame of narration. The first person narrative of the narrator relays us to Branshaw's reading of Ellis' manuscript, in turn based on various people's accounts of the story of Arledge's pursuit of Bayham's tale of what happened to him in Scotland, recounted to Arledge in the letter sent to him by Handl who, in turn, heard it from Bayham who later seems to cast doubt on its veracity. As in James' tale, 'the story's origin is therefore situated, it would seem, in a forgetting of its origin: to tell the story's origin is to tell the story of that origin's obliteration' (Felman 1982a, 122). *Travesía del horizonte* is hence also the story of the loss of its origin.

Another consequence of the various frames of narration is that the frames leave no one out. The scene of Marías' frame narrative – Holden Branshaw's library – includes, like the reading of the governess' manuscript around a living room fire in James' story, both the content of the story and the figure of the reader within itself, 'it pulls the outside of the story into its inside by enclosing in it what is usually outside it: its own readers' (Felman 1982a, p. 123). At the same time, the frame allows the content of the story to circulate outside it: through the echoing chain of multiple, repetitive narrative voices, the content, the interior of the story, becomes exterior to itself, since, as it passes from frame to frame, it is reported by a narrator who is not in immediate or direct contact with it (so, for example, Handl reports Bayham's Scottish adventure to Arledge as narrated to him by Bayham, and Ellis, who recounts in his manuscript Arledge's knowledge of Bayham's adventure, learns of it from the notes left behind by Arledge and through oral accounts of third parties). Hence, in the same way as James'

frames, Mariás' are more than mere frames, since they introduce a mediatory element within the story's content. Therefore, the frame is

not an outside contour whose role is to display an inside content: it is a kind of exteriority which permeates the very heart of the story's interiority, an internal cleft separating the story's content from itself, distancing it from its own referential certainty [...] it is a perturbation of the outside at the very core of the story's inside, and as such, it is a blurring of the very difference between inside and outside. (Felman 1982a, 123)

But, *Travesía del horizonte* does not only blur the distinction between inside and outside – it also collapses the difference between reader and writer, as Felman shows is the case in *The turn of the screw*. At each step of the chain of narration there is a reader who mediates between the story and its transmission. In order for the story to be passed on and narrated, the reader must not only read it, but he or she must also record it or, at least, transmit it orally. So, each reader thus becomes a writer and author of the story: Handl with regard to Bayham in his letter to Arledge, Ellis in his novelistic reconstruction of the events surrounding Arledge, and the first person narrator as regards Ellis' novel. Consequently, and as the narration becomes part of the action of the novel, *Travesía del horizonte* thematizes the process of creation and reception. Hence, it can also be said to have more than one author. Thus, like the story of *The turn of the screw*, it has lost an original and sole author, just as it has lost its origin.

But the story does not lose itself. It is transmitted orally and in written form and thus creates the chain of narrative frames which retell and amplify it each time.<sup>36</sup>

Curiously, as in James' novel, it is death that creates the links in the narrative chain:

Arledge dies and Ellis is so intrigued and inspired that he writes a story, then he dies and his manuscript is entrusted to Branshaw who reads it to Miss Bunnage and the first

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<sup>36</sup> Bayham's story increases in 'thickness' every time it is enveloped in yet another frame of narration as the narrators and their stories are included within each subsequent frame.

person narrator, and, after Miss Bunnage dies, the narrator feels compelled to tell us his tale of the story.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, as Felman says of *The turn of the screw* in this regard, death is responsible for the displacement of the story and the process of substitution of the narrators and appears not as an end but as a starting point (Felman 1982a, 128).

However, it is not death alone that is responsible for the stories' displacements: in Mariás' and James' novels, it is also the fact that the mysteries remain unresolved, either through death or because the successive narrators simply do not reveal them. As a consequence, they arouse the interest and the curiosity of successive readers who perpetuate the story by becoming involved with it. That is the way in which uncertainty is sustained. In *Travesía del horizonte* – as in *The turn of the screw* – the mysteries are not explained. A whole series of questions remains unanswered. What really happened to Bayham? Was he really kidnapped or did he invent the story for reasons of his own? What does Arledge find out from Bayham in the end? And why does Arledge then abandon his illustrious career in literature? Are the two somehow linked? Why does he retreat to Scotland, precisely the place to which Bayham was allegedly taken after being kidnapped? What makes Ellis so intrigued that he spends the rest of his life and fortune trying to uncover the mysteries surrounding Arledge? What did Miss Bunnage know? What does the narrator find out in her papers after her death?

What can the meaning of all these mysteries be if their answer is not revealed? The mysteries are only meaningful in terms of their effects. We have to ask, as Felman does with regard to James, not *what* is the explanation of or solution to the mysteries but *in what way* do they escape meaning, *how* they mean precisely by remaining meaningless. In other words, we have to ask what their function is in terms of the

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<sup>37</sup> In James' tale the dying governess gives the manuscript to Douglas who, shortly before dying, entrusts it to the first person narrator.

narrative structure and that is clear: the mysteries set the story in motion. By having their meaning suspended, they create suspense with the help of uncertainty. It is because the mysteries surrounding Bayham, Arledge, Ellis, Miss Bunnage, and the first person narrator are not revealed that there is a story in the first place. There is a story because there are mysteries which intrigue its readers. And, to the extent that the readers become obsessed with the mystery and its solution, we can say that it is not the readers who comprehend the text, but the text which comprehends the readers, just as it encloses the figure of the reader within the narrative (the latter detail can thus be read allegorically, as it prefigures the apprehension of the reader). In James' novel, for example, the governess is so intent on making sense of the ghosts' relationship to the children that, in her attempt to grasp the answer, she kills one of the children. In Mariás' novel, Victor Arledge also commits a murder which is a direct consequence of his similarly obsessive stalking of the secret. The vocabulary used to describe Arledge's mental state shortly before killing Léonide Meffre in a duel is very revealing of the reader's (Arledge) relationship to the text (Bayham's story) whose secret he is stalking:

Pero Victor Arledge careció durante aquella travesía de la lucidez que siempre le fue característica y, obcecado por lo que había dejado de ser simple curiosidad para convertirse en un mero trastorno, era incapaz de separar las virtudes de los defectos en una persona. Empezó a detestar a Léonide Meffre, el único obstáculo de sus planes, de manera desmesurada. (101)

Arledge has lost his characteristic lucidity and is blinded by a curiosity that has become a disorder. Our first person narrator is similarly affected, albeit to a lesser extent, admitting he has become obsessed after the reading of *La travesía del horizonte* is completed:

El libro, en verdad, me había entusiasmado y más que la obra de Edward Ellis en sí, lo que había acabado de despertar mi curiosidad había sido la historia y la personalidad de Victor Arledge [...] Por ello, desde el momento en que me había



acordado de la existencia de la señorita Bunnage me encontraba en un inusitado estado de excitación, tan impaciente estaba por saber detalles – que al parecer ni Edward Ellis había logrado averiguar – acerca del asunto que entonces ya me obsesionaba. (195-196)

It is this obsession with the mysteries that engenders narrative: the content of the mysteries is suppressed and in place of their solution what is recounted is the story of the quest for their explanation, a story of uncertainty. The suppression of the solution creates a structure that transcends the narratives' frame as it repeats itself.

The readers mature into narrators precisely in that they become aware of the importance of creating uncertainty, not least through the suppression of explanation. Ellis seems to have been perfectly aware, as he writes a novel without even knowing the answer to the mysteries it contains, that what is important is not the solution of the mystery but the creation of ambiguity, the *how* and not the *what*. He hints at mysteries and leaves the rest up to the reader. Miss Bunnage is also aware of this when she explains to the first person narrator the reasons why she cannot yet reveal the truth of *La travesía del horizonte*:

Verá, si ahora contestara a su pregunta tendría la impresión de estarme comportando como uno de esos escritores que dejan leer sus novelas antes de que estén terminadas, y eso no me gustaría: demostraría que soy muy impaciente y que no sé callar en los momentos adecuados. *Hay que saber prolongar la incertidumbre*. (85 – my italics)

Knowing how to prolong uncertainty and appreciating the value of uncertainty is also what our first person narrator learns, when, in the final sentence of *Travesía del horizonte*, he does not reveal to us, the readers, the conclusions he draws from the manuscript pages found in Miss Bunnage's possession.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 'Por debajo de la lectura de la intriga existe otra lectura más profunda por la que se intenta transmitir el valor de la incertidumbre frente al conocimiento de la verdad, como si el quedarse en la incertidumbre, en la penumbra, fuera mejor o al menos lo sólo [*sic*] alcanzable por la condición humana', concludes de Asís (1996, 353).



Thus, through imitative writing, Marías, like his narrators, seems to have learned from James that the mark of an accomplished storyteller is creating uncertainty and knowing when *not* to tell.<sup>39</sup> This is the secret of *Travesía del horizonte*.

Both of Javier Marías's first two novels are characterized by an entertaining playfulness on four levels through which they assert the pleasure of reading associated with most imitative writing, the corrective of laughter introduced by imitative writing of which Bakhtin speaks (1988, 139). Firstly, the stories they narrate are entertaining narratives. Secondly, the style in which these are narrated is entertaining because of the reflexive nature of imitative writing, its metafictional element and the distance shown to exist between language and reality. Thirdly, the imitative nature of the texts also means they constantly refer the reader to narratives imitated, allowing for a pleasure to be derived from an indirect re-reading of the texts imitated, as well as from not having to choose between the two readings ('le plaisir de n'avoir pas à choisir son plaisir', as Bouillaguet puts it [1996, 19]), as the imitative text encloses the text imitated.<sup>40</sup> And fourthly, they afford the diverting spectacle of the creative pleasure, given that the above three sources are manifestly part of the author's process of creative imagination – the delight of storytelling, of constructing a reflexive narrative, and of imitating other texts.

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<sup>39</sup> In his preface to the novel, James insists on the importance of avoiding the particular: 'Portentous evil – how was I to save that, as an intention on the part of my own demon-spirits, from the drop, the comparative vulgarity, inevitably attending, throughout the whole range of possible brief illustration, the offered example, the imputed vice, the cited act, the limited deplorable presentable instance? [...] One had seen, in fiction, some grand form of wrong-doing, or better still of wrong-being, imputed, seen it promised and announced as by the hot breath of the Pit – and then, all lamentably, shrink to the compass of some particular brutality, some particular immorality, some particular infamy portrayed: with the result, alas, of the demonstration's falling sadly short' (James 1993, 135). That is why *The turn of the screw* refuses to divulge its secret, as Douglas himself says before the reading of the manuscript: '“The story *won't* tell,” said Douglas; “not in any literal, vulgar way”' (James 1993, 5).

<sup>40</sup> 'Du coup, le lecteur averti, qui en vaut au moins deux, ne manquera pas de trouver l'imitation ressemblante, et donc amusante – c'est du moins le pari de l'imitateur', in Genette's words (1982, 93).

Javier Marías' literary beginning is thus characterized by *progymnasmata* through imitation, opting for imitative writing as a first step in his creative formation. By turning to foreign models and producing 'foreign' or cosmopolitan narratives wholly set abroad and exclusively populated by foreign characters, he, as part of the *novísimos*, breaks with Spanish literary tradition, especially the immediately preceding one, and with any Spanishness whatsoever. By disengaging himself from Spanishness and *engagement*, by rejecting realism and questioning the mimetic imperative of art, by providing the corrective of laughter through playful foreign imitative writings, Marías postulates the autonomy of literature and inaugurates a radically different Spanish novel. He breaks with Spanish isolation<sup>41</sup> and destabilizes and challenges the idealized cultural unity of the nation and its language.<sup>42</sup> More importantly, through imitation, he opts for a form of writing which places a firm emphasis on form and style, on the *how* of writing, the single most important element informing all of his novels from the outset. This preoccupation with style intensifies as it becomes more extravagant in his third novel, *El siglo*, and is examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>41</sup> See Labanyi (1995a, 298) and Marías (1993, 54). Eduardo Mendoza speaks of his generation's 'responsabilidad de volver a integrarse en la cultura occidental' (Mendoza 1996).

<sup>42</sup> See Marsha Kinder on how the intentional hybrids of Spanish filmmakers of the 1950s attempted something very similar (Kinder 1993).

## Chapter II

### *El siglo:*

#### A question of style

First published in 1983, *El siglo* is Javier Marías' third novel. Its style has been described as obscure (Rojo 1989, 87), excessively opaque (Romero 1996, 85), and exuberantly baroque (Pittarello 1996, 20; see also Marías 1995, 10). Much more so than in any of the preceding and subsequent novels, the style of this third novel is, indeed, anything but transparent: it is so conspicuous that the reader's attention is regularly diverted from content to form, from message to medium, from what is being said to how it is being said, so that one can argue that the novel is less about the argument, ideas, themes, or characters it introduces than about the way in which these are given shape. The narrative voice(s), the diction, the choice of figures, the rhetorical devices, and the form of the sentence or period stand in the foreground and demand the reader's attention to such an extent that it is impossible not to affirm that their strong presence obeys a self-conscious emphasis on style on the author's part. In turn, such an accentuation of stylistic features also leads one to ask whether, ultimately, form does not predominate over content and whether the *how* does not determine the *what*.

It is thus that *El siglo* is significant in Marías' development: it represents the crystallization of the author's realization of the primacy of style in his writing, a primacy foreshadowed in his first two novels in that, through their imitative configuration, form predominates over content.

‘The virtue of the modern novelist’, Mark Schorer has argued, ‘ – from James to Conrad and down – is not only that he pays so much attention to his medium, but that, when he pays most, he discovers through it a new subject matter, and a greater one’ (Schorer 1988, 108). In his choice of James and Conrad as models for his second novel in particular, Marías was already, consciously or unconsciously, aligning himself with this tradition. The exaggeration of formal elements, the prose which repeatedly draws attention to what it is doing, the opacity, or baroqueism, of his third novel represent, on the one hand, a somewhat grandiloquent attempt by Marías to develop formal aspects or possibilities of his writing and, on the other hand, an aggressive display of the realization of the supreme significance of style.

Indeed, ‘baroque’ is a term that could be used to describe the novel’s ornate or sumptuous style, its use of rare or curious ideas, figures, devices, and words. In great part this is because *El siglo* is profoundly and consciously influenced by one of the seventeenth century’s most celebrated English stylists, Sir Thomas Browne, as Javier Marías himself has repeatedly acknowledged (Marías 1995, 10; 1993h, 56, 60; 1989f, 162). The discussion of the novel’s style will hence involve comparisons with, and draw on analyses of, seventeenth-century English prose and Browne’s in particular. This chapter will refer to works on English, rather than Spanish, prose style precisely because of this influence of English writers on Marías (and also because, as far as I know, there is a lack of in-depth discussions of seventeenth-century Spanish prose style). Given that the term ‘baroque’ seems to have been bandied about quite freely and its meaning has become rather diffuse, a danger René Wellek was already alluding to in the 1940s, using the term too freely would probably raise more questions than it would answer (Wellek 1963, 90). I shall therefore use it sparingly, especially since the interest of this chapter

lies more in the elements that might lead one to invoke the label than in labelling or categorizing the particular style, to paraphrase Stanley Fish on the subject (Fish 1972, xi).

The present chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is dedicated to an analysis of specific stylistic features on the level of voice, diction, use of figures and rhetorical devices, and shape of sentences exemplifying this predominance of manner over matter. References to the content, although relegated in the discussion because the content is subordinate to style in the novel, are not omitted altogether, because certain themes introduced in this novel have come to form part of subsequent narratives and can therefore be said to be part of Marías' overall novelistic universe. Part two will focus on an elucidation, and on the wider implications of this protagonism of style in *El siglo*.

### *I. Aspects of style*

*El siglo* consists of nine chapters alternating between the first and third person. The four even chapters in the third person omniscient narration tell the story of Casaldáliga, from his birth in 1900 up to the age of 39. He is shown to be a spineless and irresolute individual. Having been inculcated by his father from a very early age with the need to find a clear and unmistakeably individual destiny, he unsuccessfully tries to become a martyr through marriage and then as a war hero. Finally, at the age of 39 he succeeds in becoming an informer. The five odd chapters in the first person are narrated by Casaldáliga himself who focuses mostly on his present circumstances and his encroaching death. A retired and wealthy judge, he lives in a lake district – indeed he spends most of his time observing the lake his house overlooks – with his secretary, his much despised adopted son, who is an internationally successful tenor eagerly awaiting

his stepfather's death in order to inherit his vast fortune, and the latter's lascivious wife. Casaldáliga is visited every Tuesday for lunch by colonel Berua, the person whom he had served as an informer.

With this novel Marías moves a step closer to Spain. Although the names of the characters – Natalia Monte, Berua, Constanza Bacio, Lemarquís, Donato Dato, among others – are ambiguous enough to be non-Spanish and there is no mention whatsoever of any Spanish place-names, there is little doubt that the country the novel is set in is Spain and that the civil war referred to is the Spanish one: at a certain point during his self-enforced exile in Lisbon, Casaldáliga looks in the direction of his country, a direction which leaves little doubt as to the country's identity (177).<sup>1</sup> That is the moment Casaldáliga decides to participate in this war with a view to encountering a heroic destiny. Of course, cowardly and irresolute as he is, not only does he not take any active part in the conflict, but he returns to his homeland three years later, after the end of the war. It is then, in 1939 and at the age of 39 (the character's age is obviously not accidental), that he becomes an informer. Thus, Marías approaches Spain and its history not too directly or explicitly, primarily because the initial rejection has not been fully overcome: 'El antiguo rechazo, el antiguo pudor no están aún vencidos del todo' (Marías1993h, 58).

But apart from moving closer to Spain, in this novel Marías also moves closer to his own biography as a source of inspiration. 'En vez de avanzar en el espacio ajeno, ha llegado el momento de retroceder en el tiempo de uno mismo', as Elide Pittarello puts it (1996, 18). A family matter provides an initial impetus: in the preface to the 1995 edition of the novel, he explains that his father, Julián Marías, was denounced to the

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<sup>1</sup> All references are to the 1995 Anagrama edition of *El siglo*, unless otherwise indicated.

authorities by his best friend, after the end of the Civil War in 1939, for his Republican affiliations and was sent to prison. This occurrence, coupled with the story of the other famous Spanish writer (Cela) whom we mentioned in the introduction and who also offered to become an informer, had made an impression on him and *El siglo* is, according to Marías, an attempt to understand ‘de qué modo personas valiosas o meritorias, de las que en principio era difícil esperar vilezas, podían llegar a cometer la mayor de todas sin verse aparentemente conminadas ni forzadas a ello’ (Marías 1995, 9). Nevertheless, it would be misleading to say that *El siglo* is the story of an informer: the initial subject matter is transformed through its treatment. In many ways, this story becomes only an excuse, a pretext for stylistic experimentation.<sup>2</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of narrative voice.

#### *a) Voices*

From the perspective of the story line, the alternating points of view are motivated by the fact that what is recounted in the chapters in the third person is the story of Casaldáliga up to the point when, at the age of 39, he meets his destiny. From then on he acquires a voice of his own and tells his own story in the first person. But the two different points of view are also characterized by the two opposing narrative voices or tones that, according to Marías, have dominated the subject of death and mortal agony – a theme prevalent in *El siglo* – throughout the history of literature: one is the burlesque, the farce, and the other a more grand and, indeed, grandiloquent style (Marías 1993h, 60). In *El siglo* Marías attempts to wed the two voices, although what prevails seems to

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<sup>2</sup> ‘He aquí como nace la novela, que sin embargo nada tiene que ver con ese fragmento conmovedor de memoria familiar’, in Pittarello’s words (Pittarello 1996, 18). Similarly, Soledad Puértolas has maintained that even a work which is initially driven by resentment – and it would be ingenuous to conclude that resentment does not, in part, inform Marías choice – is transformed into something quite different as it ends up losing all traces of rancour, since art is inherently ‘generous’ (Puértolas 1996, 88-89).



me to be a certain grandiloquence, as we shall see. By opting for two different voices, Marías shifts from the outset both his and the reader's attention partially away from subject matter to the treatment to which the matter is subjected. The alternation points to Marías' self-conscious preoccupation with form and also brings to the fore the form of the narrative, forcing the reader to acknowledge and remain aware of the medium, a process of defamiliarization which we also saw in the previous chapter and which is similar to the 'de-automatization' of the Prague School of poetics (Leech and Short 1981, 28).

But the co-existence of two voices can also be seen in the light of the place which *El siglo* occupies in Marías' evolution, partly precisely as a consequence of the two voices: his third novel becomes a turning point, an exercise in style, of which the writer is seen to be in active quest. The two voices can be seen as an indication of an experimentation or indecision, as César Romero puts it (1996, 85)<sup>3</sup>, on the part of a writer who has not yet found his own. This in turn also explains why both voices lack 'naturalness', why they are both highly stylized and artificial. Neither voice is identifiable as that of the Marías of subsequent novels; both are quite self-consciously artistic and mannered artificial products. This is why Romero maintains that the style of *El siglo* is not Marías' own and why stylistic influences of others are much more evident than in subsequent novels, something we already saw most clearly in his first two novels (Romero 1996, 84). 'El escritor a la búsqueda de su propio estilo requiere el apoyo en los estilos de los demás [...] Esto es palpable en *El siglo*, pues es una novela de tránsito, de indagación del autor en su propio estilo', he concludes (Romero 1996, 85).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Romero is not mistaken: Marías has himself attributed this existence of two alternating points of view to an indecision on his part (Marías 1989d, 181).

<sup>4</sup> It is, I think, essentially the tone or voices that Pere Gimferrer, one of the novel's publishers, was alluding to when he declared that the novel seemed to him to be the work of a 50-year-old, rather than that of a man of 30, Marías' age upon finishing the novel (Marías 1995, 10).

b) *The form of the sentence*

The form of Mariás' sentences or periods closely resembles those of the seventeenth-century prose sentence as described by Morris Croll, 'pioneer and master of the subject' (Williamson 1951, 10). In an essay on late sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century prose entitled 'The baroque style in prose', Croll focuses on the form of the anti-Ciceronian sentence (Croll 1972).<sup>5</sup> He argues that there are essentially two types of sentences which characterize the anti-Ciceronian style: the 'curt period' or *période coupée* (hence a style called the 'curt style' or *style coupé*) and the 'loose period' ('loose style') (Croll 1972). The sentence of the curt style has the following characteristics: its clauses are short; it has no or few syntactical connections (sometimes 'and' or 'or' are used); the first clause expresses the fact of an idea which is then emphasized anew by subsequent clauses expressing a new apprehension of the truth contained in the first one; its clauses are deliberately asymmetrical (the clauses are of different lengths, there are shifts to new subjects, shifts from literal to metaphorical statements or from one metaphor to another, and from the concrete to the abstract); and it is a style that tends towards the aphorism (Croll 1972, 100-107). Croll maintains that in the curt period there is a 'progress of imaginative apprehension', viewing the same point from new levels, like a spiral – a revolving and 'upward' – motion of the mind 'as it rises in energy' (Croll 1972, 107).

Similarly, the progression of the sentence of the loose style adapts itself to the 'movement of a mind discovering truth as it goes, thinking while it writes' (Croll 1972,

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<sup>5</sup> He centres his discussion on the form of the sentence because he argues that the most conspicuous difference between Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian styles lies in the way the clauses of their sentences are connected (Croll 1972, 100).

109). Its sentences are longer than those of the curt style, while its clauses are connected at times by looser conjunctions, at times by more conspicuous and binding syntactic ligatures, co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and relative pronouns, which act as necessary logical means for advancing the idea but, at the same time, 'relax', at will, the tight construction which they seem to impose. The result is that both the loose and the tight connections have a similar effect of giving a significant amount of independence to clauses within the sentence (Croll 1972, 109-112). The loose sentence at first seems to have symmetry, but that is then broken as it obeys no predetermined plan. If it does, it is violated at will (it is de-centred and asymmetrical). There is thus 'constant swift adaptation of form to arising emergencies in energetic and unpremeditated movement' and 'spontaneity and improvisation in passages loaded with heavy content', the effect of great mass combined with that of rapid motion (Croll 1972, 109).<sup>6</sup>

Both forms of the anti-Ciceronian sentence are meant to portray the natural or thinking order, argues Croll, and both express the prejudice against formality of procedure, although it is the loose style which is more associated with the more sceptical phases of seventeenth-century thought 'and it appears characteristically in writers who are professed opponents of determined and rigorous philosophical attitudes', like Sir Thomas Browne. Indeed, this is the writer whose work is cited most often as an example for both styles by Croll (1972, 109-110). However, after discussing these two types of sentence separately, Croll concludes that these two styles represent two sides of the seventeenth-century mind which are not really separable nor distinguishable, so 'that in the best writers these two styles do not appear separately in passages of any length, and

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<sup>6</sup> 'The period [...] is not made; it becomes. It completes itself and takes on form in the course of the motion of the mind which it expresses' (Croll 1972, 111).

that in most of them they intermingle in relations far too complex for description (Croll 1972, 115).

I have presented Croll's analysis at length to show how in *El siglo* we have a kind of theatre of the two anti-Ciceronian forms of the sentence or period, as described by Croll. To some extent the four even chapters in the third person omniscient narration and the five odd chapters in the first person are representative of both the curt and loose styles, although, overall, the latter is the more dominant one. Perhaps the most opportune place to start is with a passage inspired in Sir Thomas Browne himself:

También los hombres están sometidos a la inercia descabezada y voluble de siglos acumulados [...] que les exigen una y otra vez la repetición de las mismas vidas y las mismas muertes, los mismos amores y los mismos crímenes, las mismas soledades y las mismas pasiones, las hazañas y las reflexiones, las tareas y los temores, las guerras, los dolores y las ambiciones, los mismos gestos y las mismas palabras [...] Y hay fragmentos del espíritu y esferas de la tierra que llevan siglos dormidos o aletargados, y que todavía esperan el beso del príncipe para reanudar la vida, incipiente, mediada o casi prescrita, que hubieron de interrumpir y dejar suspensa: la misma: quizá tan idéntica a la ya recorrida antes del encantamiento que podría pensarse si no fue todo olvidado y borrado durante los siglos de sueño para volver a empezar; como cada estación se olvida de su anterior reinado cuando gobierna otra vez, o la noche no se conoce más a sí misma y no es consciente de la usurpación metódica de los territorios que cree suyos en todo momento y que su vigía, la pulposa luna tan solicitada, paulatinamente va desatendiendo y dejando de iluminar; o como el fulgor hiemal de la nieve no se contempla ni se recuerda ni comprende que es lejana herencia de su propia herencia, o el olor de las hojas húmedas en el otoño que siendo siempre igual a sí mismo, no se sabe imitar y ha de renovarse con inocencia al tiempo que esas hojas caen. Y así, tal vez, todo ya ha acontecido aunque nada ni nadie pueda albergar la certeza de haber gozado de una vida previa, ni siquiera la amarillenta sombra. Todo está condenado a ignorarse, y, lo que es más abyecto, a ignorarse en el reflejo de su propio pasado. Todo es sopor. Y nadie ve la totalidad. (116-117)

Significantly, this passage in chapter four of *El siglo* encloses a quotation of Sir Thomas Browne – itself an example of the *style coupé* – introduced by the third person narrator who even comments on Browne's style, thus making quite plain the stylistic

preoccupation running through the novel (Browne's name is not cited but we are told these are the words of 'un médico londinense nacido un 19 de octubre para morir el 19 de octubre de setenta y siete años después: un médico de *estilo paradójico, elegante y elíptico*'; 116 – my italics).<sup>7</sup> The above passage is, to some extent, a mixture of the curt and loose styles. Although syntactical connections are not wholly absent from the passage, they are limited in their scope as they are relatively plain co-ordinating ones (primarily 'y' and 'o'). Clauses are quite imbalanced or asymmetrical (compare their radically differing lengths, the shifting subjects, the changing metaphors and similes of the second sentence). But, most characteristically of the curt style, this passage shows how, although there is no real logical progression (the end affirms nothing radically different to the beginning), there is an advance 'wholly in the direction of a more vivid imaginative realization', as the metaphors reveal different facets of a mind's apprehension (Croll 1972, 107). Indeed, the point about life's ignored repetitive cycle is not so much made by the content of the passage, as by the variety of its iterative forms (for example, the repetition of words like 'mismo' and 'todo' or the mirroring of clause structures of the first sentence). As well as this, the passage culminates in the final aphorisms so emblematic of the style.

An example of a more curt style is the following passage:

Debido a ello yo me he afanado siempre por tomar la iniciativa y ser en mis posturas consecuente y firme; cuando no me ha sido posible tanto, he procurado enmendar aquellos rumbos que no me favorecían o eran demasiado inciertos; los

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<sup>7</sup> Browne was born and died on this date. This is the Browne quotation: '*Cada hombre no es tan sólo sí mismo; ... los hombres vuelven a ser vividos; el mundo es hoy como fue en tiempos remotos, cuando nadie había; pero ha habido alguien desde entonces que es el paralelo de ese nadie; que, por así decir, es su yo resucitado*' (116). Both the first and third person narrators repeatedly discuss stylistic aspects of other people's speech explicitly, making very apparent the author's and novel's conscious concern with style, even using actual rhetorical terms in their descriptions, as in the above example or in a passage where the style of the father's lecture to his son is analyzed using terms such as 'prosopopeya', 'tautologías', or 'parlamento reiterativo' (34).

momentos que me fueron ingratos o adversos y las situaciones de que salí malparado no he cejado hasta haber conseguido trocar sus términos; y si no he podido, en ese caso los he desterrado de mi memoria [...] o bien he esperado hasta que quien me los acarreó hubiese muerto o hubiese quedado enmudecida su lengua por el confinamiento o el desprestigio, y entonces yo, único testigo y relator posible del incidente, sin nadie con quien carearme, lo he contado a mi manera y le he dado la vuelta si se terciaba. Las cosas no son como ocurren, sino como se zanan, se juzgan, se archivan y se sepultan. (127-128)

Here the clauses are shorter than those of the previous example. Note the frequent use of the semi-colon, extensively used in the traditionally long anti-Ciceronian sentence.

There are few and weak co-ordinating syntactical connections – ‘y’ and ‘o’ – and an initial idea is qualified and elaborated on by subsequent clauses, culminating again in an aphorism (‘Las cosas no son como ocurren’). Here, perhaps more forcefully than in the previous example due to the first person narration, we have again the portrayal of a mind thinking, of a meditation in progress, rather than a premeditated and logical exposition of a thought.

In the loose style, such as that of the following example, the sentence’s purpose ‘to express as far as may be, the order in which an idea presents itself when it is first experienced’ is more apparent (Croll 1972, 111):

Casaldáliga, descorazonado en su indiferencia, se rindió sin condiciones a su albedrío, y aunque la entrega fue más subjetiva que externa, más intestina que manifiesta – él nunca había impuesto autoridad alguna en la casa y en poco podía percibirse el vuelco, por muy responsable y por encima de ella que se hubiera sentido siempre –, lo cierto es que las decisiones, tanto las más graves como las insustanciales, fueron recayendo todas, mediante un sigiloso proceso de sistemática consulta y progresiva aquiescencia inaugurado a las escasas fechas de aquel revelador desayuno de invierno tardío y consolidado a lo largo de la primavera siguiente, en Constanza Bacio: bien es verdad que más por la imposibilidad de él para tomarlas que por la voluntad de ella de asumirlas y hacerlas de su competencia. (159)

One of the differences between a curt and a loose style seems to be the fact that the former is paratactic, whilst the latter is a hypotactic or hyperhypotactic style, to draw on



Auerbach's distinction (Auerbach 1953). This paragraph is a good example of the hypotactic style of many of the novel's passages with its concessionary subordinated clauses ('aunque la entrega fue más subjetiva', 'por muy responsable [...] que se hubiera sentido', 'bien es verdad'), here also coupled with interpolated clauses ('él nunca había impuesto autoridad alguna', 'tanto las más graves como las insustanciales', 'mediante un sigiloso proceso').

The result of this style is that the sentence does not progress towards clarity but reproduces the vagaries of the narrator's thought. Indicative of this is the addition of the adjectives *intestina* and *manifiesta* to qualify *entrega*: as far as the content or meaning is concerned, they are perfectly superfluous. They add nothing to *subjetiva* and *externa*. It is quite clear, I think, that they are used because, by duplicating the structure 'más... que...', they add something to the rhythm, to the sound of the sentence, but not to its meaning. Hence, one could legitimately ask, as does Williamson of Lyly's sentences and style, whether Marías' style 'merely subserves his thought – whether his thought has not been moulded so as to exploit a style' (Williamson 1951, 34).

Equally, the main part of the second member of the sentence, reducible to eight words, 'las decisiones fueron recayendo todas en Constanza Bacio', is considerably lengthened by an additional thirty-eight words. The result of this is a suspension of the syntactical unit announced or implied in the first part and, hence, a suspension of its final meaning which is deferred or postponed. The sentence is not completed but prolonged and this obliges the reader to read otherwise: not only is one forced to follow the intervening unfolding thoughts, but one is obliged to pay closer attention to the actual structure of the sentence and regularly to re-read sections (so as to remind oneself of the grammatical subject of the sentence or clause, in this case, for example, the noun



which the indirect object pronoun *las* replaces in the final clause), to return to the already read sequences in order to follow its syntactical and concomitant semantic displacements. In turn, this means that attention is distributed between, or shifted from, content to style, from *what* the sentence says to *how* it says it.<sup>8</sup> The same is true of the following loose sentence:

Y fue sólo entonces, cuando un mar benigno y en permanente calma empezó a sustituir a su otra cotidianeidad, ya abolida pero hasta aquel instante aún no olvidada (un mar asimismo sin vientos y de pronto desecado: la existencia serena junto al padre y la prima y bajo los ojos sin luz del aya, lo que constituía ya para siempre su legado y su formación), y a ser uno con su aliento sosegado, fue entonces cuando la idea que había pasado tan rauda por su cabeza mientras charlaba con el señor Dado, la misma que el día de su unión le había rondado con muda insistencia, en oleadas tenaces pero sin osar penetrar formulada en su obnubilada mente ni mancillar la ocasión, empezó a adquirir cuerpo verdadero y a echar raíces – con pausa, con fragilidad, con sombras de reverencia y una penumbra de temor – en sus cada vez más receptivos y aplacados ánimos. (104)

The main clause – ‘Y fue sólo entonces’ – is interrupted by a number of other clauses introducing syntactically parenthetical material of such a length (69 words intervene, coupled with the unusual step of the insertion of a colon within a parenthesis which further expands the sentence) that it has to be repeated when the main part of the sentence resumes (‘fue entonces’).<sup>9</sup> The main subject of the sentence is then introduced – ‘la idea’ – only to be immediately qualified and interrupted by a relative clause and further digressions, before finally being united with the first of its objects – ‘cuerpo’ – 44 words later. The digressive nature of this sentence generates the hyperhypotaxis which inflates it. This syntactic enlargement present in both the curt and loose styles, as is

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<sup>8</sup> Frédéric Bravo has shown how the syntax as spectacle is a particular and discernible trait of Juan Benet’s writing (Bravo 1994). I would say that this is the case in Benet’s work much more so than in Marías’ *El siglo* – one need only think of the enlargement or hypertrophy of the sentence in *Una meditación* or *Volverás a Región*, for example – although its presence in this work of Marías’ is significant as it links him to Benet (perhaps a testimony of Benet’s impact).

<sup>9</sup> In part, it is also repeated to avoid confusing the second *cuando* with the first, more subordinate, one.

evident in the examples discussed and widespread in *El siglo*, also leads to the ‘insubordination’ of grammatically (and concomitantly semantically) subordinate units, units not pertaining to the main part of the sentence. These digressions or ‘secondary’ units outgrow the ‘primary’ ones and thus ‘hijack’ or divert meaning along another, more circuitous route which imposes its own rhythm and signification (for example, the sea metaphor in the above example expands, complicating and displacing the initial meaning it seemingly set out to serve). The importance assigned to the apparently less important parts of the sentence is inverted. Hence, the digressions are not subordinate to the ‘main’ meaning: through the form of the sentence, the meaning becomes subordinated to and to a large extent determined by the initially auxiliary.

One can, therefore, conclude that the anti-Ciceronian form of Mariás’ sentences in *El siglo* means that, firstly, the true narrative action of the text becomes the sentence and its style. Secondly, not only does it ‘narrativize’ thought, but it also shapes it.

### *c) Diction*

Mariás’ diction in his third novel also contributes to foregrounding manner over matter and conveys the general impression that the choice of words is dictated more by their formal, rather than semantic, qualities. The prose, albeit to a considerably lesser degree than that of Sir Thomas Browne, is ‘amphibious’ in its self-conscious mixing of Castilian with Latin, French, English, and German.<sup>10</sup> In this confluence, the foreign languages acquire a particularly performative function, similar to their defamiliarizing effect observed in Chapter I. It is the materiality of the foreign passages that is

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<sup>10</sup> This is the adjective Wilson uses to describe Browne’s mixing of Latin and English (Wilson 1960, 68). Patrides speaks of the nominally Latinate nature of Browne’s prose and of the harmonic confluence of Latin and Anglo-Saxon (Patrides 1977, 46-47).

foregrounded and of interest (as I argued is partly the effect of the phonetic value of the foreign words used in the previous two novels) – especially in their insertion into the main body of the text in the form of italics – often more than their semantic content in the context. They seem to have been chosen more for their sound and formal qualities on the level of the signifier, rather than for their contribution to meaning, as when Casaldáliga regularly discovers his father reading the verses of Victor Hugo which he quotes (30). The sumptuous verses cited contribute to the grandiloquent style of the novel, but not to the characterization of the father. Indeed, more credible is the explanation that the verses came first, that is to say, that Mariás looked for a way to cite these and that he, therefore, chose to make the father ‘un afrancesado entusiasta y empedernido’, so that the French verse can be said to shape the character, rather than the character having been determined prior to the decision to include the verse, an instance of manner determining matter (30).

The Latin quotations, in particular that of a religious French song (in Latin) occupying eight lines of text and subsequently translated into Spanish by the narrator, at best contribute to the grandiloquence of Casaldáliga’s discourse (203, 205). Two lines from a composition by Schönberg, again followed by their translation from the German, are effective in terms of their ‘sonority’ in their double morphological – the foreignness of idiom and the italicized characters – and phonetic contrast with Castilian Spanish (58). Like all the foreign language insertions in the novel, they are even more effective for the reader who does not comprehend their meaning, as they then work purely on the level of the signifier, visually and phonetically, which, to my mind, is clearly the purpose of their insertion in the first place. If this were not the case, then the translations which follow, or a mere paraphrase or reference, would suffice, and the original would

not need to be cited in the first place, were it not for an interest in the materiality of the foreign language. The insertion of two verses of sonnets by Milton (121, 186), in whose work the protagonist takes solace, seems again to obey a similar motivation, whilst, as in the case of the references to Browne, again providing an explicit link to seventeenth-century English literature and the preoccupation with style, a key to reading the novel.

One of the stylistic features of Browne, like Milton, was the extensive use of doublets (approximately synonymous words or reiterated phrases) (Patrides 1977, 45-46; Fish 1972, 294-297).<sup>11</sup> This is also very characteristic of Marías' prose in *El siglo*. The most prevalent example of this is the phrase 'un destino nítido e inconfundible' repeated throughout the novel (for example, 33, 34, 46, 114, 177), coupled with variations such as 'único e intransferible' (46) or 'original y único' (118), giving shape to the theme of Casaldáliga's anxious quest for such a destiny. Other examples of doublets include the approximate synonymy of 'ningún suceso real y fehaciente' (74), 'verificación o refrendo' (74), and 'una flexibilidad y una libertad que para sí quisieran las mentes más fértiles e ingeniosas' (75); the precise synonymy of the double doublet 'la encarnación o el símbolo de su destino [...] un emblema o representación de su sino' (176); or the isolexism by derivation of 'tan poco efusivas las emociones, tan poco emotivas las efusiones' (106).

All doublets produce an effect of what Patrides calls 'rhymed thought' (1977, 45). Through this rhyming effect they are also an instance of the predominance of form over content. The second element of the doublet is semantically superfluous – it adds nothing to the meaning of the phrase, as all the above examples make plain. Not only is

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<sup>11</sup> I am aware, however, that any comparison of these two writers can be misleading, since, unlike Browne's prose which continuously draws the reader's attention away from what is being said to how it is being said, Milton's style is at the service of certain beliefs (Fish 1972, 365). In this respect, the Marías of *El siglo* has more in common with Browne than with Milton.

the development of ideas not logical, but there is no real development, although there appears to be, something quite characteristic of Browne's and other seventeenth-century prose (Williamson 1951, 33-34). Yet the presence of the second element seems to be dictated and justified by the first element and the ensuing rhythmical pattern. As the last isolexism shows, for example, it is style and, in this case, the rhythm of language that determines what is said. 'Tan poco emotivas las efusiones' follows naturally after 'tan poco efusivas las emociones'. But on its own it would make no sense, since an *efusión* could never be 'poco emotiva': an effusion is always an unrestrained emotional outpouring. The adjective thus contradicts the noun. But as readers, we – although reason does not – accept this contradiction, since, in the context in which it is introduced, in its resonance of 'tan poco efusivas las emociones', it makes sense stylistically. The fact that it is semantic nonsense becomes irrelevant. Style prevails over content.

The final element of diction which I should like to highlight is a relative grammatical idiosyncrasy which purposefully draws one's attention towards the use of language and away from its meaning. As George Williamson has maintained, custom is the standard through which clearness and distinction of prose style are measured, the latter being achieved through the unusual, artificial arrangement which introduces considerations beyond those of clearness (Williamson 1951, 58). Through his somewhat unusual form of agreement of an adjective preceding two nouns, Marías consciously opts for this 'artificial' arrangement in order to disrupt the customary and foreground form.

As is well-known, normally, in Castilian Spanish, an adjective that precedes two or more nouns and is intended to modify them all, need only agree with the first noun so

as to avoid the combination of a plural adjective preceding a singular noun, although, in certain cases, a plural adjective is required to eliminate any serious uncertainty.<sup>12</sup> In *El siglo*, as far as I can see, *all* pre-posed adjectives that qualify two or more nouns are plural in form. Here are some examples: ‘con las debidas atención e ilación’ (102-103), ‘con considerables quemazón y apremio’ (171), and ‘con enteras confianza y tranquilidad’ (231). This grammatically correct agreement with both nouns is quite conspicuous because it is not customary and appears unnecessary and excessive. By drawing attention to the use of language, it also underlines the fact that the adjective is clearly intended to agree with both nouns. Hence, not only is it a very precise use of language, but it also foregrounds the lack of precision of the grammatical rule: how is one to know that an adjective in fact does modify more than one of the subsequent nouns if it is singular in form? If it is meant to qualify only the first one of the series, the sentence would be exactly the same. How can one tell the two meanings apart? The fact of the matter is that one cannot differentiate between the two; to a great extent, it is a question of interpretation. Javier Marías’ intentionally unconventional grammatical constructions draw the reader’s attention beyond the content of the sentence – or do not even allow the reader to get as far as processing it – and introduce grammatical, that is to say, formal or stylistic, considerations.

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<sup>12</sup> In the *Esbozo*, the Real Academia de la Lengua explains that, in opposition to adjectives following nouns, there is no need to modify a singular pre-posed adjective’s form when it is intended to qualify more than one noun due to its more subjective nature: ‘El adjetivo antepuesto, por su carácter subjetivo, tiende a limitar su alcance al sustantivo que inmediatamente le sigue, y con ello la concordancia, puesto que se trata de una matización emotiva indiferenciada, *que se puede propagar a todos los sustantivos sin necesidad de expresarla gramaticalmente*’ (Real Academia Española 1973, 392 – my italics). The RAE’s latest grammar does not pronounce itself on this matter (Alarcos Llorach 1994). John Butt and Carmen Benjamin explain that the combination of a plural adjective preceding a singular noun is awkward (1994, 59).



d) *Use of rhetorical devices and figures*

Mariás' use of rhetorical devices and figures in *El siglo* can be termed extravagant. The frequency with which a number of devices and figures are used in the novel can only lead one to conclude that their use is informed much less, if at all, by the intention to clarify a point or an idea and considerably more by the nature of their formal qualities – musical phrasing, cadence, balance, rhythm – or simply for their own sake, leading the *how* to prevail over the *what* yet again. Discussing W.C. Summers' argument that, whereas Seneca uses figures to give emphasis and clearness to a point being made, in Isocrates and Gorgias, figures are constantly used as musical or rhythmical devices and often for their own sake alone, thus actually obscuring thought, Williamson concludes: 'The excessive use of any formal pattern is likely to incur, if not to deserve, the charge of subservience to sound' (Williamson 1951, 83). This is also a charge that can be brought against *El siglo*.

Undoubtedly the most excessively used rhetorical device in the novel is the simile, introduced in most cases by 'como', and presenting bizarre or curious images (see, for example, 22, 30, 63, 95, 160, 207, 237). Equally pervasive and more striking is a type of simile which introduces images related to the sea, such as the following (all italics used here are mine):

Tal vez hayan descubierto que el secreto de la inmortalidad reside en estarse muriendo imperecederamente, en un vaivén agónico, inagotable y átono – *como el de un barco que a toda vela no llegara nunca a doblar un cabo*. (21)

El imponente volumen del torso – que se asemejaba entonces, al caminar (tanta era la inestabilidad de su avance), *al desconchado mascarón de proa de una embarcación pequeña cuya parte inferior resultara casi invisible por la espuma soliviantada y el constante cabeceo del tajamar*. (31)



Pero de otro lado te digo que si no tomas esa determinación serás *como aquel náufrago* [...] *que se debatía contra las olas durante días y días*. (49)<sup>13</sup>

However, together with this last simile, the two most striking and elaborate ones are related to Lisbon. The first likens the city of Lisbon to the bow of a ship:

[A Lisboa] no la ha abandonado una antigua y arraigada vocación de proa que en algún tiempo compartió con aquella [la Gran Bretaña]: está tan a punto de desprenderse del continente que se siente a veces como el tajamar de una gigantesca y anciana nave que dependiera de ella para su avance. Sin embargo, Lisboa intuye que ese larguísimo barco cuya popa no se divisa ya no puede ni quiere seguir navegando. Está anclado definitivamente. (167)

The second is one which compares Lisbon's Baroque church of São Vicente de Fora to a cruiser:

Aquella blanca e inmensa basílica lisboeta abandonada en su desgarbada plaza como un viejo crucero – ya por siempre anclado y amarrado a boyas, decorado de puerto, inservible para navegar – convertido en faro o en museo flotante al término de su vida de viajes. (177)

The vehicle of the similes, and especially those of the more ample maritime ones I have cited, do not substantially contribute to clarifying the tenor and often, through the juxtaposition of dissimilar elements, as is the case in the last two examples in particular, turn into conceit, a favourite device of much seventeenth-century literature (Wellek 1963, 99; Ruthven 1969). The comparisons are curious, unusual, far-fetched; thus the vehicle of the similes is no longer subordinate to the tenor, as it acquires a primary role, detracting attention away from meaning and towards form.

But if the choice of the maritime similes is not really informed by their contribution to the content of the narrative then what is it that determines it? I would venture to say that the similes are chosen because Mariás, shortly before writing *El siglo*, had translated Joseph Conrad's *The mirror of the sea*, 'de cuyo prolongado y simbiótico trato mi pluma no salió inmune', as he himself admits in the 1995 preface to

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<sup>13</sup> This simile extends over a total of 19 lines.

the novel (Marías 1995, 10).<sup>14</sup> Marías' translation of Conrad's famous autobiographical exploration of the sea provides him with images used in *El siglo*, but images which add little to the configuration of meaning in the latter and more to the foregrounding of formal elements, since the similes, as the extraneous additions which they are, stand in contrast to the context in which they are introduced.

His use of the past participle *derrelicta* to qualify the same church which is likened to a ship is further proof of this Conradian contagion.<sup>15</sup> Although meaning 'derelict', the irregular past participle of the disused verb *derrelinquir* is not normally used in Spanish in the way it is used in English. Of course, in the context of the abandoned church it seems perfectly appropriate, especially to speakers of Latin and English. However, in Spanish usage *derrelicto* is more of a nautical term more frequently used to refer to ships or objects abandoned at sea rather than churches (this is indeed the only definition of the noun given by both the Academy's [1992] and Seco's [1999] dictionary; the latter does not even list it as a past participle). I mention such a seemingly insignificant detail because Marías uses this term, I believe, not only because it is less common than, for example, *abandonado* or *desamparado*, but also because of the influence of Conrad's book, which contains stories of abandoned or derelict ships and in which 'derelict' is frequently used, mostly as a noun (see, for example, Conrad 1988, 138). Therefore, the term would have suggested itself, especially since the church of São Vicente de Fora is later explicitly equated with an abandoned vessel.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> His translation, *El espejo del mar: recuerdos e impresiones*, was published in 1981 (Conrad 1981).

<sup>15</sup> 'Casaldáliga dio por primera vez con esa iglesia derrelicta e incomprensible una tarde otoñal de domingo' (173).

<sup>16</sup> *Derrelicto* is a word that Marías has since repeatedly used to describe certain buildings (see, for example, the description of a factory in Venice [Marías 1991d, 37]). Precisely this idiosyncratic use of the adjective is one of the reasons which has led many to suspect Juan Manuel de Prada of plagiarizing Marías in his novel *La tempestad* where, amongst other alleged features, he used this adjective in such a curious way and context (see de Prada 1997, 226).

But similes are not the only rhetorical figures used with frequency. Many of the figures used rely on echoing effects resulting from repetition, an important stylistic device in all Baroque literature, according to Hatzfeld, and one which characterizes Marías' style in his novels from *El siglo* onwards (1964, 146). This explains the prevalence of anaphora (or *repetitio*) and parison in the novel, both appropriately present, for example, in a paraphrase of Sir Thomas Browne:

Mas ¿quién conoce el destino de sus huesos, o cuántas veces lo habrán de enterrar? ¿Quién posee el oráculo de sus cenizas, o sabe hasta dónde llegarán a esparcirse? ¿Quién intuye qué pisadas hollarán su tumba, o cuántas urnas serán volcadas? Quién el tacto y forma de su calavera, o el humo pestífero de sus propias reliquias? ¿Quién el rictus postrero, o el dibujo del agujero en su frente? (83)<sup>17</sup>

An echoing effect is produced as Marías adopts and extends Browne's range of rhetorical questions and repetition of the same structure and opening word in each. Again, one wonders whether the thought unfolded is not a by-product of the repetition, which suggests or insinuates itself from the second question onwards, whether the figures do not obey rhythmical rather than conceptual considerations.<sup>18</sup>

Anadiplosis is another frequently used rhetorical figure (for example, 'las manos sucias y sucio el destino que hallé' [131]; 'estaba hecho a esperar, esperar casi constituía su forma de vida' [180]), as is epanalepsis (for example, 'de ojos siempre fustigadores y melancólicos siempre' [184]), paronomasia (for example, 'de atractiva irritabilidad, aplanada ahora por la ociosidad, contristada por el exilio y también endurecida por la edad' [184]), homoioteleuton (for example, 'arrullándolo, narcotizándolo, paralizándolo' [179-180]; 'lo que siempre había intuido, y nunca asumido o ni siquiera sabido' [112-

<sup>17</sup> This is an extension of what were originally two sentences in the second paragraph of a letter preceding the text of *Hydriotaphia* proper: 'But who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? who [*sic*] hath the Oracle of his ashes, or whether they are to be scattered?' (Browne 1977, 45).

<sup>18</sup> For another example of the combined effect of anaphora and parison, see page 164.

113]), homoiopiton (for example, ‘comprendió que todo *casaba* como en el cinematógrafo tan despreciable, y comprendió también por qué se había *casado* con ella’ [114 – my italics]), or alliteration (for example, ‘ese *Plorans ploravit* plosivo y patético’ [207]; the adjective *plosivo* has undoubtedly been chosen for purely phonetic reasons here, namely to lengthen the alliteration, and this claim could also be extended to many of the above figures which repeat an element).

Other frequently used figures include synecdoche, metaphor, metonymy, and prosopopeia, the latter repeatedly extending over a number of pages and attributing life and human qualities to the lake (15-23) or the city of Lisbon (164-170). Prosopopeia and simile, in particular, seem to form part of an aesthetic method of imagery and figures linking seemingly ‘alien, discontinuous spheres’, as Wellek has argued is true of seventeenth-century styles (Wellek 1963, 110). In the end, like Browne (Webber 1968, 152), Marías foregrounds, through the plethora of rhetorical devices, style more than meaning, the medium more than the message.

#### *e) Aphorism*

The aphorism is the final rhetorical device which I would like to highlight, especially because from *El siglo* onwards it becomes a permanent feature of Marías’ style. Marías himself has discussed the use of the aphorism, which he calls ‘pensamiento literario’, as he highlighted it in Benet’s work (Marías 1992d).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In his definition of the literary aphorism, Marías emphasizes its freedom from the development of a rational argument: ‘A diferencia del científico o filosófico, el pensamiento literario se caracteriza por dos privilegios que son sólo suyos: no está sujeto a argumento ni a demostración [...], no depende de un hilo conductor razonado ni necesita mostrar cada uno de sus pasos’ (Marías 1992d). I think that the degree of use of the aphorism is another element which separates Marías’ post-1970 generation of writers from those of the Franco era; the former make a much more extensive use of it in their narratives. (Apart from Marías’ work, the novels of Muñoz Molina, Puértolas, or Pombo are good examples of this.)

We have already seen some examples of aphorisms in the discussion of the novel's sentence structure where we observed that many sentences naturally culminate in one, typically moving from the concrete to the abstract. Approximately synonymous with the *pensée*, *sententia*, or *maxim*, the aphorism was very widespread during – but certainly not exclusive to – the seventeenth century. Jeremy Robbins has explained that the use of the aphorism was especially widespread in the seventeenth century because aphorisms are a fragmented form of knowledge particularly suited to an age profoundly affected by scepticism:

In an age which, as a result of the impact of scepticism, saw the gradual erosion of confidence in the human capacity to obtain true and certain knowledge of the world, the aphorism was a literary form ideally suited to express the tentative, partial and fragmentary nature of human knowledge which was believed to be all that was obtainable. (Robbins 1998, 114)

Browne's style is one characterized by the constant use of the aphorism (Webber 1968, 149-183; Wilson 1960, 69). Marías' style, in part undoubtedly influenced by Browne, is also aphoristic. *El siglo* is the first of his novels in which the aphorism becomes a significant stylistic device, allowing him to discover, introduce, and explore certain ideas which, from then on, recur throughout his novels, such as the interconnectedness of past and present (for example, 115-117), the importance of a person's childhood for a true knowledge of that person (193), the nature of all things being determined not by their occurrence but by their reception and relation, their mediation (128), or death, murder, and usurpation (145, 178, 210).<sup>20</sup>

In this, Marías aligns himself firmly with the seventeenth-century view with regard to the uncertainty and fragmentary nature of human knowledge. It also explains Marías' speculative, conjectural style, characteristic of all his subsequent novels, as we

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<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the thoughts introduced by Marías' aphorisms are not dissimilar to seventeenth-century reflections (Hatzfeld 1964, 116-117).

shall see in the remaining chapters: the rhetoric of doubt, of uncertainty, of hazarding a wide solution or admitting a wavering conjecture, shows that Marías is ‘happiest in that realm where conjecture can never be overtaken by proof’, as Wilson says of Browne (1960, 79). So, too, are all his narrators from *El siglo* onwards: like Casaldáliga who literally loses interest in his wife and his marriage as soon as the uncertainty regarding her health has been removed, they prefer speculation, conjecture, and uncertainty (most apparent in the plethora of adverbs of doubt, such as *tal vez* or *quizá*) to certainty, advocating thus the impossibility of certain knowledge of things.

A consequence of an aphoristic style is also the constant movement from narration of events to more abstract reflection. Hence, the latter interrupts the former and produces a retardation or suspension of the action. This occurs in the novel not only through aphorisms, but also through the relatively long digressive, hypotactic, or hyperhypotactic sentences, as well as in the first person narrative of Casaldáliga in the five odd chapters, which is essentially a narration of his ruminations or meditations. Even the third person narration focuses on a limited number of specific and important scenes in Casaldáliga’s life up to the age of 39, which become turning points in his quest for a destiny, and moments which are immobilized as the plot evolves less diachronically and more synchronically as these scenes become points of departure for digressive thoughts and are explored and exploited to their fullest potential. Thus the primary location of the narrative is a mental rather than physical continuum (also a characteristic of Henry James’ narratives, for example [see Watt 1972, 282]). All three – aphorisms, sentences, and first person narration – albeit in different ways and on different levels, create the impression of time standing still because events do not unfold progressively.



These elements contribute to a relative narrative stasis and a ‘detemporalization’ of the narration or dilation of present narrative moments as the fiction progresses less in a diachronic fashion and more through the long and digressive thought-patterns of the narration. In turn, this relative stasis contributes to foregrounding form, as a diachronic pursuit of the narrative line is suspended and, in this suspense, the reader’s attention is distributed or divided between action, plot, or themes and the form of the narrative, the form of the text and its language.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, in *El siglo*, voice, sentence structure, diction, rhetorical devices, and the relatively static form of narration persistently call attention to what the author is doing, elevating form to a level which forces the reader to read more in terms of the *how* than the *what*. More often than not, the choice of content seems to respond more to demands made by form. As Stanley Fish has affirmed of the effects of Browne’s prose, ‘the more the reader responds to the performance *qua* performance, the less he is committed to its “message”’ (Fish 1972, 367). In Marías’ case, too, style becomes the true spectacle of the novel. Like Browne and unlike many pre-1970 Spanish writers, he has no designs on the reader and therefore does not shift attention away from the work and what is happening in its formal confines.<sup>22</sup> His style is not at the service of content – if anything, it is the latter which seems to be at the service of the stylistic effects, as the reader’s attention is repeatedly diverted from the implications of what is being said to the skill displayed in saying it. His prose is self-indulgent in that it displays the author to advantage, somewhat ostentatiously exhibiting a certain virtuosity. It is an expression of aggression, an assertion of a certain independence. The experience of Marías’ prose has

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<sup>21</sup> Bravo has discussed the ways in which this is particularly true of Juan Benet’s style (Bravo 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Fish contrasts Browne to Bacon, Bunyan, Herbert, and Milton who, he argues, do seek to change the reader’s mind about things, are out to do us good through self-examination and self-criticism, offer an uncomfortable and unsettling experience as the way to self-knowledge, etc.; in the latter, style is at the service of certain beliefs (Fish 1972, 365).



its climaxes not in moments of insight and self-knowledge, 'but in moments of wonder and admiration for the art that has produced it', as Fish says of Browne (1972, 372).

But in Marías' novel this is a problem in the sense that at this stage he has not yet fully matured as a writer: his 'abuse' of form through an exaggeration of stylistic traits means that the latter have limited impact because their expressive function is confined, as style is not really working with content, but rather independently from it. They are to some extent 'empty husks, decorative tricks, craftsman's clichés', a frequent phenomenon in the seventeenth century according to Wellek (1963, 113). There is an imbalance between form and content: from the playfully imitative storytelling in his first two novels, Marías has moved to an immoderate emphasis on style to assert his formal capabilities. But, in hindsight, it seems a necessary step. Firstly, it frees him from an entirely imitative form of writing and, secondly, through its excesses, it represents the crystallization of the realization of the supreme importance of style for his development as a writer, as it gradually leads him to the discovery of his own subject matter, his own *what*.

## *II. Style in question*

The realization of the importance of style was, of course, already prefigured in his first two novels as he showed an awareness that in order to write a novel he needed less an original subject matter and more a form in which to envelop and present it. This process of realization seems to have been continued in the significance translation holds for his writing. In the eleven years that elapsed between the publication of his second and third novels, Marías dedicated a lot of his time to translation, a practice which he saw, and

still sees, as an intrinsic and extremely significant part of his 'apprenticeship', his development as a writer and, indeed, that of any writer (Marías 1989b, 27 and 1994e).

In a sense, undertaking translation after his first two novels was consequent: in their parodic imitation of other writers' styles they represent a certain conception of literary training of which translation, as far as it, too, is an imitation of other styles, is merely another facet. In fact, Marías believes that literary creation and translation are activities which complement each other and are not as distinct as is often thought.<sup>23</sup>

It therefore comes as no surprise that not only did he consciously choose the texts he wanted to translate, but the writers he chose to translate into Spanish were writers he wanted to learn from and to study. They were writers with whom he felt he had certain affinities or who had already influenced his own writing in some ways and he tried to engage with their style through a conscious choice of texts to be translated.<sup>24</sup> Thus, his writing of *El siglo* was preceded by his translation of not only Conrad's *Mirror*, but also Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia* and followed by that of *Religio medici* and *On dreams*, a collection published in 1986 (Browne 1986). As we have seen, this goes a long way towards elucidating the style, as well as the pre-eminence of style in his third novel.

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<sup>23</sup> In an essay entitled 'Ausencia y memoria en la traducción poética', he has argued that the two activities are not as distinct as we tend to think and that their difference is of a quantitative and not a qualitative nature in that both have their origins in memory, the only difference being that in the translation of a given text, recollection is clearer and more precise than the memory which constitutes the origin of literary creation (Marías 1993i). In this he is opposed to Walter Benjamin's belief that translation and literary or poetic creation are two distinct activities, as expressed in 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers' (Benjamin 1972, 9-21).

<sup>24</sup> All of Marías' translations into Spanish have been of literature in English. He has translated works by the following authors: John Ashbery, W.H. Auden, Sir Thomas Browne, Joseph Conrad, Isak Dinesen, William Faulkner, Thomas Hardy, Edith Holden, Vladimir Nabokov, Laurence Sterne, Wallace Stevens, Robert Louis Stevenson, and W. B. Yeats, as well as the short stories by Martin Armstrong, Winston Churchill, Lawrence Durrell, Richard Middleton, and Sir Ronald Ross for the collection *Cuentos únicos* (Marías 1989g).

What this emphasis on style also shows is that for Marías, style is becoming the privileged driving force of his writing. It is increasingly seen as the vehicle for the discovery, invention, exploration, communication, and evaluation of the subject matter. *El siglo* represents this gradual recognition. And in this, Marías shares a conception of the art of writing with Juan Benet, thus also bearing witness to the influence of the latter on his work. In the introduction I noted that Benet has been an important figure for Marías' generation of writers. Marías has often expressed his utmost admiration and respect for Benet, the man and the writer, explaining that he has had a profound impact on his work (for example, in the selection of articles on Benet included in the section 'Sobre Benet' in *Literatura y fantasma*, Marías 1993a). However, he has also maintained that Benet's style is too personal and, therefore, unique and inimitable. In the preface to *El siglo* Marías says: 'Muchos quisieron ver en este libro en su día un fuerte influjo de Juan Benet, a quien admiré tanto que procuré no imitarlo. Quizá no lo conseguí del todo' (1995, 10).<sup>25</sup>

However, apart from the concrete parallels that can be drawn between these works, there is a much more fundamental overlap between the Marías of *El siglo* and Benet, and that lies in the conception of style as evidenced in the former's novel and the

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<sup>25</sup> There are certain parallels that can be drawn between *El siglo* and Benet's first two novels in particular. For example, in *Volverás a Región* we have, as in Marías third novel, a mixture of narrative voices (an anonymous narrator, Doctor Sebastián, Marré, and the author-editor) and in both *Volverás a Región* and *Una meditación* the temporal structure is divided into various segments. In *Una meditación*, Benet's second novel, the narrator, like Casaldáliga, is looking back into his past and awaiting the consummation of his destiny, and death is a theme or motif in both their narratives. Then there are details such as the uncertainty surrounding the name of one of the characters in *Una meditación* – Rumbal, Rombal, Rubal, Robal, Rumbás, are the names used in alternation to refer to the same character – just as in *El siglo* one of the character's names is also not fixed – Dato or Dado are used interchangeably (Marías 1995, 96-103). In both their works the Civil War is a backdrop, the landscape comes alive through anthropomorphism (the Mantua mountain in Benet, the lake in Marías), the setting is unspecified, and their style of writing is digressive and the narration static (more so in Benet where the detemporalization of narration and the dilation of the present moment are extreme). Benet's style, too, has been described as 'baroque' (Pérez 1984, 18). And like Marías, Benet makes constant use of the aphorism.

latter's *La inspiración y el estilo*. First published in 1965, *La inspiración y el estilo* is a book on the two topics included in its title.<sup>26</sup> Benet argues that in literature, content, meaning, or message are, or should be, subordinates of style, that the way in which something is said, the treatment of matter, is more important than what is being said (Benet 1973). Style, he contends, imbues the subject matter of a work with a permanent value that maintains an interest in the work after the novelty value of the matter has become obsolete; the matter has no value in itself other than a possible originality or novelty; hence, novelists subordinating style to matter will find that their works eventually hold no interest (Benet 1973, 113-140).<sup>27</sup> The interest in a work of literature resides not in matter but manner:

Eso quiere decir que el interés no puede radicar en la información en sí (que un día lo tiene, pero que al día, al año o a la década siguiente lo puede dejar de tener), sino en aquel estilo narrativo que haga permanentemente interesante un conocimiento que ha dejado de tener actualidad. (Benet 1973, 137-138)

The Comte de Buffon's famous statement is a result of the same argument, namely that knowledge, facts, discoveries are easily detached and passed on, as they 'are external to the man; the style is the man himself' (Leclerc 1972, 17). This means that 'la cosa literaria sólo puede tener interés por el estilo, nunca por el asunto' (Benet 1973, 135).

Style thus has a 'detemporalizing' effect in that it extracts the deciduous nature of matter whilst enveloping it with a lasting one through its treatment (Benet 1973, 138).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I will here be referring to the 1973 Seix Barral edition.

<sup>27</sup> This is, of course, not a new notion. The Comte de Buffon asserted the same in the eighteenth century: 'The well-written works are the only ones that will go down to posterity: the amount of knowledge in a book, the peculiarity of the facts, the novelty even of the discoveries, are not sure warrants of immortality' (Leclerc 1972, 15). However, this is the only point of contact between the two, since Buffon's views of writing are based on standard classical rhetorical assumptions (the foundation of style is based on the split between thought and expression in that the arrangements of thoughts and ideas occur prior to writing, after which the writer looks for the appropriate means to express them).

<sup>28</sup> Benet's approach is anti-realist or anti-mimetic and rhetorically anti-classical (in that he is opposed to suasion and to communication of ideological content as the message is subservient to the medium), as Janet Pérez maintains (1984, 22). And his argument is in part clearly a response to or a reaction against the realism or mimesis that dominated the novel of the Franco years. He obliquely refers to the latter when he

He argues in favour of the primacy of style in literature, although explaining that style itself is not a rational thing, since reason has not been able to find a way of measuring it (Benet 1973, 158), something which still holds true today, despite, or perhaps in some way because of, the advances of stylistics.<sup>29</sup> Benet further argues that a writer matures the moment he or she abandons the quest for new and original themes and reaches the decision to concentrate on cultivating a style and diverting his or her attention to more eternal themes ‘a los que será capaz de dar nuevo brillo con las delicias de un estilo nuevo y depurado’ (Benet 1973, 34-35). This is true, for example, of Browne, who, according to Wilson, is not necessarily a profound thinker, but has an elaborate style and ‘makes what was old seem new by the obliquity of his vision and the strange majesty of his style’ (Wilson 1960, 85). If thus developed, argues Benet, style becomes an autonomous entity, outgrowing an initial subservient phase, separating itself from the willpower that set it in motion in the first instance, and looking for its own work and economy, thereafter becoming a vehicle of invention, both in the sense of creating and its earlier one of discovering or finding.<sup>30</sup>

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directs his attack at the Spanish novel of the second half of the nineteenth century and its subordination of all literary values to a documentary function; ‘De ese vicio arranca toda una trama del tronco – *que en nuestros tiempos se sigue prodigando con sorprendente inocencia*’ (Benet 1973, 134 – my italics). Moreover, he sees a neglect and distrust of style as part of the problem of Spanish literature since the seventeenth century, coupled with a barrier inherited and interiorized by Spanish writers since then, which renders them unable to escape from the dictates of reality (Benet 1973, 174-180). The only way out of such a situation for a writer is the creation of style (Benet 1973, 137-138).

<sup>29</sup> Style defies comprehensive analysis, as is attested, for example, by the different delineations that take shape in discussions of style such as Chatman (1971), Babb (1972), Chapman (1973), Fowler (1975), Cluysenaar (1976), Leech and Short (1981), or Bradford (1997).

<sup>30</sup> The idea that style discovers matter is shared by many. Josephine Mills argues: ‘As manner in the treatment of matter, style chooses and discards matter as well as arranging it; it works within the category of *invention*’ (Mills 1971, 25). And Mark Schorer maintains that technique is not a secondary but a primary operation because it discovers; it is the only means the writer has of ‘discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it’ (Schorer 1988, 102 and 108).

In *El siglo*, Marías, on the one hand, seems to me not yet to have fully attained the maturity of which Benet speaks, since he is, at least in part, in pursuit of the new or original, the singular and unusual. I think that his choice of subject matter, the peculiar story of a man searching for a distinct destiny by becoming an informer and then looking back into his past, is to some extent governed by considerations of novelty. In addition, it is a narrative too structured in advance (see the temporal framework and the alternating points of view and voices) to allow style full freedom in the invention of matter. ‘Hoy ya no escribo del mismo modo’, Marías has said of *El siglo* (Marías 1995, 10). I think that is because his style, unlike that of his subsequent novels, has not yet become wholly autonomous. The exaggeration of stylistic features does not make for a polished style: there are too many fireworks, so to speak; it is too much of an aggressive display of strength, somewhat too self-indulgent and intent on impressing, and therefore perhaps not quite balanced enough to operate effectively and fully as a means of invention through a complementary interrelationship of manner and matter.

On the other hand, however, Benet’s proclamation of the primacy of style is one that Marías seems to have heeded. The interest of *El siglo* ultimately does lie more in the treatment than in the matter, through the conscious exaggeration of the text’s formal properties (voice/point of view, sentence structure, diction, and choice of rhetorical devices). Furthermore, in *El siglo* we have the first indication of a very specific consequence of this primacy of style put forward by Benet: he argues that style also serves to cover the seams, to leave no tracks where an initial inspiration – a sentence, a paragraph, an idea – is inserted into a whole narrative which is thus merely a pretext created after the fact (therefore also a post-text) to envelop, sustain, and justify the initial inspiration (Benet 1973, 161-168). Despite the advance planning, we have seen that *El*



*siglo* is, at least partly, the result of such a process (the use of foreign language quotations, the maritime images, the paraphrases and quotations of Browne), as indeed Marías himself has admitted.<sup>31</sup>

So, *El siglo* is a transitional novel. Marías' development from his first two works onwards, through a process of translation, and culminating in his third novel, is characterized by a conscious attempt to refine his medium, to elaborate a style. It attests the realization, albeit only tentatively accomplished in practice, that style can create and discover subject matter. In this emphasis on style, it would also represent in Benetian terms an attempt to break free from the impositions of reality made on the Spanish novel under Franco and beforehand. At the same time, Marías' attention is starting to be diverted to more eternal themes (such as death or the interconnectedness of life) which will become constants in his fiction. It signals the beginning of the eventual autonomization and normalization of Marías' style, whilst introducing stylistic elements, such as digressiveness and errancy, aphorisms, repetition, conjecture and uncertainty, which will henceforth come to form part of all his subsequent narratives.

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<sup>31</sup> 'En *El siglo* hay tres o cuatro páginas que estaban allí desde el principio, pidiendo un envoltorio de tinta y papel. Quizá el resto del libro existe por culpa de esas páginas' (Marías 1993h, 61).



## Chapter III

### *El hombre sentimental:* The artistic imagination

First published in 1986, *El hombre sentimental* is Javier Marías's fourth novel (Marías 1986a).<sup>1</sup> This novel, more distinctly than any other, illustrates and announces the importance of the imagination in Marías' writing. The creative imagination is a fundamental feature of Javier Marías' writing and his novelistic development. We already saw the freedom afforded the narrative imagination in the many extravagant, extraordinary, and extraterritorial adventures contained his first two novels. In his fourth one, the narrative imagination unfolds in a radically different, ordinary, and everyday environment. But it is no less potent. And this is because the importance of the creative imagination has been recognized by Marías and, in addition, it comes to form part of his writing process. Thus, the creative imagination also becomes closely interrelated with formal and stylistic aspects of his novels, as we shall see in the present and subsequent chapters. Furthermore, the significance which the imagination acquires also reflects and contributes to the independence of his novels from reality.

The import of the imagination becomes manifest in this novel in two ways: a) the creative process in which the novel originates brings to light the significant role of the writer's imagination, and b) the work and significance of the imagination is enacted and thematized in the narrative itself. These two aspects will be the focus of the present chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> All references are to this 1986 edition of the novel by Anagrama, unless otherwise indicated.

Before we proceed, I would like to highlight certain features of the concept of imagination which will have a bearing on the discussion. The imagination has a long history and many interpretations and is perhaps the most important distinguishing feature of literature (see Wellek and Warren 1956, 26; Chapman 1973, 3; Lamarque 1996, 9). Generally speaking, the imagination is ‘un pouvoir d’écart grâce auquel nous nous représentons les choses distantes et nous nous distançons des réalités présentes’ (Starobinski 1970, 174). Thus, on the one hand, the imagination has a ‘reality function’, involved in the mnemonic activity of reproducing the past or anticipating the future, as Wallace Stevens has argued (Stevens 1942, 144). On the other hand, the imagination can contribute to distancing one from the given surroundings of the immediate world, thus creating another ‘reality’. It is in this latter sense that all literature is an example of the activity of the imagination (Starobinski 1970, 175). I. A. Richards has called this the ‘deep opposition’ which haunts the subject of the imagination, separating a ‘realist outlook’, which sees the imagination as a means of apprehending reality, from a ‘projective outlook’, where the imagination is treated as a figment (Richards 1962, 26).

Traditionally, imagination occupies an intermediary function between feeling and thinking and follows perception whilst preceding the activity of the intelligence, an important locus for our discussion. For Plato it represents a mixture of sensation and opinion, for Aristotle an activity of the mind following sensation (Starobinski 1970, 177). For the Ancients, the material of the imagination (its images) is imposed on the mind from the outside, hence the notion of the individual as medium visited by the muses or interpreter of God, something which gives rise to the concept of inspiration, the creator as receiving the breath, as seized by the image, as possessed (Percival

1997b).<sup>2</sup> Dionysios (Longinus) speaks of the presence of the image for creator and audience resulting from the imagination (Longinus 1965, 121). Similarly, in the sixteenth century Montaigne asserts that a strong imagination produces the event.<sup>3</sup> The seventeenth-century views of Hobbes (for whom fancy or imagination develops from memory), Dryden (for whom imagination is invention), Locke (who developed the concept of the association of ideas), and Addison (who amplified Locke's associative theory), among others, concur in that they ultimately see the imagination as subordinate to judgment and reason, a view which prevailed in the eighteenth century, with the exception of Blake for whom the imagination was 'holy' and, significantly, towards the end of the century, Kant, for whom the entire phenomenal world is a product of the imagination, as imagination creates in the act of perception, as well as Schiller (Richards 1962, 27; Schiller 1962, 309-412; Kerrane 1971; Parkin 1978, 6; Cuddon 1991, 327-328; Kant 1924). By the time of the Romantic period, however, literature, as Eagleton puts it, 'was becoming virtually synonymous with the "imaginative"' (Eagleton 1983, 18). In great part influenced by Kant, for the Romantics and, most notably, Coleridge, the imagination becomes the prime agent of the synthesis of all human faculties, and imaginative creations, especially the literary work, become instances of an organic unity opposed to the 'fragmented individualism of the capitalist marketplace', as Eagleton maintains (1983, 19-20; see also Abrams [1953]; see Richards [1962] on the concept of imagination for Coleridge; on the Romantic imagination see also Bloom [1971]).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This notion has survived to this century. W. B. Yeats, to cite a poet whom Marias has translated, has maintained that poets 'receive as agents, never as owners' (Yeats 1962, 302).

<sup>3</sup> '*Fortis imaginatio generat casum*' (Montaigne 1950, Book I, Chapter XXI, 122).

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it is not hard to see that the role of the concept of 'imagination' from Kant onwards is crucial in the development of 'aesthetics' and the independence of the work of art (for accounts of modern aesthetic criticism and its background see Hardison [1971] and for a study of Kant's aesthetics see Parret [1998]).

Freud is undoubtedly indebted to these developments: his 'map' of psychic life built around conscious and unconscious worlds partakes of the inherent and well-established opposition between imagination and reason, judgment, and intellect. Hence, for example, it is no accident that he quotes Schiller in the *Interpretation of dreams* in support of his assertion that 'involuntary thoughts', like poetic creation, meet a resistance which seeks to prevent their emergence (Freud 1976, 177).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, he is reductive in that he suggests the writer's imaginative activity ('day-dreaming' or 'Phantasieren') is to be attributed to wish-fulfilment resulting from the memory of an earlier, childhood experience which arouses the wish (Freud 1971).<sup>6</sup> Bachelard, on the other hand, is opposed to this notion of the imagination as a sublimation of elements of the unconscious in the 'anti-reductionism that is a common feature of the phenomenological reaction against classical psychoanalysis' (Forsyth 1971, 235; Bachelard 1948).

Although there seem to be 'as many kinds of imaginations as there are descriptions of it' (Casey 1976, 5), I would venture to say that most, if not all, detailed accounts of what the imagination is and does have the following six elements in common which will affect my analysis of Marías' imagination. 1) The workings of the imagination are based on unconscious, inspired, intuitive, dream-like, spontaneous, or other processes of association and these processes make it a unifying force (see, for example, Ribot 1906; Armstrong 1946; Schiller 1962, 407; Wilbanks 1968, 170; Starobinski 1970, 186; Kerrane 1971; Wilson 1983, 16; Jung 1997). 2) These processes of association are not governed by the intellect, reason, or the conscious mind;

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<sup>5</sup> Although, as Casey says, Freud 'stops short of explicitly claiming that free association is itself a form of imagining' (Casey 1976, 4, n.8).

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Ricoeur (1965) on this matter.

imagination is therefore, to a greater or lesser extent, opposed to or untouched by reason and rational, conscious thought (Kant 1924; Stevens 1942, 154; Armstrong 1946, 13; Ehrenzweig 1967, 49-55; Kerrane 1971; Benet 1973, 38, 58; Gullón 1983, 26). 3) Hence, imagination entails freedom (from practical considerations, from purpose; imagination is determined in the act of perception and free in aesthetic creativity, as Kant has argued (Kant 1924, section 43; Stevens 1942, 138; Armstrong 1946, 182; Furlong 1961; Schiller 1962, 358, 407; Kerrane 1971; Gardner 1982, 35). 4) The apparently insignificant, therefore, is – at least potentially – significant in imaginative creations. ‘A true artist will agree with the psychoanalyst that nothing can be deemed insignificant or accidental in a product of the human spirit’ (Ehrenzweig 1967, 20; see also pages 21 and 22). 5) Imagination is related to affective states (Ribot 1906; Longinus 1965, 121-124; Starobinski 1970, 181). 6) The imagination creates another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it: it can make what is absent, present, what is unreal, real, it can incarnate what is potential or possible, it is involved in remembering the past and anticipating the – or a possible – future (Stevens 1946, esp. 136, 144, 150; Leavis 1950, 60; Aristotle 1965, 43; Falk 1971, 286; Riddell 1971, 56; Wilson 1983, 16, Kundera 1988, 132; Lamarque 1996, 15).

Jean Starobinski affirms that literature forces the critic to consider the imagination not only in the imagined universe of all literature, but also on the level of the author, thus expanding the work of the literary analysis (1970, 194). Hence, a double approach is required. ‘Nous voyons se dessiner une tâche critique qui ne se limiterait pas à l’analyse de l’univers *imaginé*, mais qui observerait la puissance relative au sein du contexte humain où elle surgit’ (Starobinski 1970, 194-195). The six characteristics of the imagination outlined will assist in the analysis of Javier Marías’ imagination and that

enacted in his fourth novel, as well as in the subsequent assessment of the implications and significance of this imagination ‘squared’.<sup>7</sup>

### *I. Javier Marías’ imagination*

Perhaps the most appropriate starting point is Marías’ definition of fiction which places the imagination at the very heart of his writing. He has affirmed, not unlike Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Julie, that fiction permits the writer to inhabit the only or the most bearable territory there is (Marías 1993f, 121).<sup>8</sup> And he goes on to define fiction in terms traditionally used to describe the work of the imagination:

Esto quiere decir que [la ficción] le permite vivir en el reino de lo que pudo ser y nunca fue, por eso mismo en el territorio de lo que aún es posible, de lo que siempre estará por cumplirse, de lo que no está aún descartado por haber ya sucedido ni porque se sepa que nunca sucederá [...] El novelista verdadero no refleja la realidad, sino más bien la irrealidad, entendiendo por esto último no lo inverosímil ni lo fantástico, sino lo que pudo darse y no se dio, lo contrario de los hechos, los acontecimientos, los datos y los sucesos, lo contrario de ‘lo que ocurre’. (Marías 1993f, 121)

Hence, in Marías’ terms, fiction is identical to the sixth property of the imagination outlined above. This alone highlights the supreme importance of the imagination in his writing.<sup>9</sup>

‘En el inicio de mis novelas suele haber una imagen, o una frase, o una situación aislada que sin embargo necesitan de algo que les dé cabida, que las albergue, para

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<sup>7</sup> In placing an emphasis on imagination and especially on that of the author, I may be accused of contributing to impeding the ‘free circulation’ of the fictional text by restricting the proliferation of meaning (see Foucault 1988). However, I think that it will become clear in this chapter and in the thesis overall that the workings of Marías’ imagination are not too constraining an element (on this, see also Christie [1995b]).

<sup>8</sup> In *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, Rousseau has his character say that fiction is the only realm worth inhabiting: ‘Le pays des chimères est en ce monde le seul digne d’être habité’ (Rousseau 1952, 693).

<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere he has explained, paraphrasing Isak Dinesen, that even in order to recount something that has occurred one has first to imagine it as well (Marías 1998b, 16). See also his prefaces to his translations of some of Dinesen’s work (Marías 1990b, 12, and 1990c).

costrar pleno sentido' (Marías 1993h, 61). This is particularly true of his novels from *El hombre sentimental* onwards.<sup>10</sup> In the preface to the 1987 edition of *El hombre sentimental* Marías explains that, at the origin of this novel, there were two mental images: a man and a woman separated by a fence in a rural landscape (Marías speculates that this image, rather than something he actually saw in reality, could be from an illustrated edition of *Wuthering heights* or from one of its cinematic adaptations), and a woman sitting in a train from Milan to Venice (he points out that this second image is real: this woman was sitting opposite him during the three hours of the journey and she is identical to the Natalia Manur described in the opening pages of the novel).<sup>11</sup> When he started writing he had little more than these images and the opening sentence of the novel in his mind, as he has admitted (Marías 1987b, i).<sup>12</sup> And these fragments were initially meaningless for the author, as Pittarello asserts (1994a, 9). It appears that this is his usual way of proceeding, as he is not interested in knowing in advance what his novels will be about. In an essay entitled 'Error con brújula', a title which succinctly sums up Marías' creative writing process, he sheds further light on the matter:

No sólo no sé lo que quiero escribir, ni a dónde quiero llegar, ni tengo un proyecto narrativo que yo pueda enunciar antes ni después de que mis novelas existan, sino que ni siquiera sé, cuando empiezo una, de qué va a tratar, o lo que va a ocurrir en ella, o quiénes y cuántos serán sus personajes, no digamos cómo terminará [...] Lo cierto es que todavía hoy sigo escribiendo sin mucho propósito y sin ningún objetivo del que pueda hablarse. (Marías 1993l, 91)

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<sup>10</sup> We have seen that, to some extent, this is already true of *El siglo*; however, we have also seen that a certain amount of planning went into the composition of that novel (for example, the careful alternation between first and third person narration, the temporal framework structuring them, the somewhat intricate storyline)

<sup>11</sup> As far as I can see, his fourth novel bears no relation to Emily Brontë's work, apart from the general fact that they are both love stories.

<sup>12</sup> It appears these fragments were circulating in his mind for a number of months before he put pen to paper (Marías 1986b, 5).



This disinterest in mapping his novels in advance extends to storyline, form, and structure (Marías 1993l, 92). It constitutes a decision to position himself in a sphere of uncertainty whilst writing – ‘Necesito ir tanteando’ (Marías 1987b, ii) – because advance knowledge of the work bores him as it resembles more a process of transcription than imaginative invention (Marías 1990, 35 and 1993l, 92).<sup>13</sup> But he is equally aware of the importance of creating and maintaining a level of uncertainty within the narrative itself.<sup>14</sup>

This decision to allow uncertainty to inform his writing to such a degree is extremely significant in that it attests a process of refinement or maturation, according to Juan Benet:

Tengo para mí que con mucha frecuencia el escritor empieza a depurarse a partir del momento en que [...] deja entrar una gran dosis de incertidumbre en sus opiniones y en sus doctrinas, tanto como en sus métodos de trabajo. (Benet 1973, 30-31)

It is also significant, because, if the work is already complete before being written, then written language and the imaginative and inventive writing process become inessential, as both Antonio Muñoz Molina and Maurice Blanchot have explained.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> He has also attributed this ‘deficiency’ of a literary project to his lack of a forward-looking approach (Marías 1993d, 20 and 1993l, 91).

<sup>14</sup> ‘La certidumbre produce desinterés en el lector. En cambio, la incertidumbre alimenta la curiosidad’ (Marías 1989b, 26). As we saw, this awareness of the importance of uncertainty as a narrative device already characterized *Travesía del horizonte*.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Una novela recién comenzada puede malograrse si quien la escribe sabe demasiado acerca de ella: teniendo el libro completo en la imaginación [...] no existe una verdadera necesidad de escribirlo’ (Muñoz Molina 1997, 343). Blanchot is more explicit: ‘Mais si l’œuvre est déjà tout entière présente dans son esprit et si cette présence est l’essentiel de l’œuvre (les mots étant tenus ici pour inessentiels), pourquoi la réaliserait-il davantage? Ou bien, comme projet intérieur, elle est tout ce qu’elle sera et l’écrivain, dès cet instant, sait d’elle tout ce qu’il en peut apprendre, il la laissera donc reposer dans son crépuscule, sans la traduire en mots, sans l’écrire, – mais, alors, il n’écrira pas, il ne sera pas écrivain. Ou bien, prenant conscience que l’œuvre ne peut pas être projetée, mais seulement réalisée, qu’elle n’a de valeur, de vérité et de réalité que par les mots qui la déroulent dans le temps et l’inscrivent dans l’espace, il se mettra à écrire, mais à partir de rien et en vue de rien – et, suivant une expression de Hegel, comme un néant travaillant dans un néant’ (Blanchot 1949, 296).

Marías' creative efforts are directed precisely at writing 'à partir de rien et en vue de rien'. As Elide Pittarello has said, his interest lies not in 'el plan de un trayecto', but in 'la prueba de un paso, de ese viaje por tierras incógnitas que es para este autor la invención de ficciones' (1994a, 10). It is the process of the novel's unfolding whilst he writes that interests him: 'El propio *hacerse* de la novela es lo que me interesa [...] Lo realmente interesante es el hecho de que las cosas puedan ser de una manera u otra' (Marías 1989b, 26). He seems to be aware of the dangers of disintegration threatening a work elaborated in this way, maintaining that he avoids these by way of a particular fidelity to the already written:

No me permito cambiar lo que he escrito según me vaya conviniendo o vaya *averiguando* – exactamente igual que el lector – de qué trata o qué sucede en esa novela, sino que me obligo a *atenerme* a lo ya escrito, y hago que sea eso lo que condicione la continuación. (Marías 1993l, 92)

This way of proceeding is very significant, because it is a way of breaking what, in his study of the psychology of the imagination, Anton Ehrenzweig calls the 'pernicious rule of preconceived design' and a means of 'setting free the diffuse and inarticulate vision of the unconscious' (1967, 49-50). It is a way of ascertaining that reason does not constrain the imagination, because it is a 'bad thing and detrimental to the creative work of the mind if Reason makes too close an examination of the ideas as they come pouring in – at the very gateway as it were' (Schiller quoted by Freud [1976, 177]).<sup>16</sup> Marías' initial images and his opening sentence, which precede the writing of

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<sup>16</sup> Benet's account, in *La inspiración y el estilo*, of the interference of reason in the process of inspiration is more colourful, but, like a lot of his literary criticism, very much in line with Kant's and Schiller's aesthetic criticism (something which, I think, has been overlooked): 'Cuando el escritor, en cambio, no acepta ese acto de fascinación y exige de sí mismo que en todos sus juicios se hallen presentes los agentes de control de la razón, no hace sino expulsar de la fiesta a la única persona que en un momento dado puede animarla y cuya ausencia a la larga no puede disimularse por mucha que sea su ciencia retórica' (1976, 86).

the novel, are the incomplete and vague fragments, the equivalent of the fertile motifs in music, drama, and the visual arts of which Ehrenzweig speaks, which bear the imprint of the undifferentiated vision that created it and refuse immediate aesthetic satisfaction (1967, 48). Instead, for their justification, these fragments are fertile, in that they contain the promise of a further development. But this means that the writer must be able to bear the suspense, not least because they may turn out to contain the key to the emerging total structure far more securely than a carefully worked out composition (Ehrenzweig 1967, 49).<sup>17</sup> Marías' suspension of reason and judgment allows him to enter into what Ehrenzweig calls a conversation with the work, in which both the writer's ideas and the medium have a constant impact on each other, ideas being modified through an impact on the resisting medium, whilst imposing new uses on it (Ehrenzweig calls it also a struggle between conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind [1967, 57]).

Writing thus becomes a vehicle for knowledge, understanding, and invention, in the sense of discovery, as Marías is well aware:

Sólo en la escritura descubre [el escritor] que vio cosas que no sabía que vio hasta ese momento, que se fijó en detalles que le pasaron inadvertidos y que recupera o descubre para su escritura [...] Y aún es más, el escritor puede también descubrir que sabe o entendió más de lo que creía saber o entender. El escritor cuenta y explica, y al hacerlo *se cuenta y se explica* lo que de otra forma no habría llegado a saber ni a entender jamás. (Marías 1994b, 25)<sup>18</sup>

As Ehrenzweig has put it: 'True craftsmanship does not impose its will on the medium, but explores its varying responses in the conversation between artist and work [...] A passive but acute watchfulness for subtle variations in the medium's response is the true achievement of craftsmanship' (1967, 58). The artist reacts to variables which enforce

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<sup>17</sup> This suspense is the fertile and dramatic tension in which the creative imagination involves the artist, of which Parkin speaks with regard to Yeats (Parkin 1978, 5).

<sup>18</sup> He has repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that writing pertains to the realm of invention understood as discovery (see, for example, Marías 1987b, i).

changes of plan and interacts with the work as it unfolds. An excessive wish for control would blind the artist's sensitivities to subtle variations (Ehrenzweig 1967, 58).

Marías has said that it is the lack of a project, the uncertainty, which allows him to err or digress in his writing – ‘ese no saber me permite instalarme [...] en la errabundia’ – and that it is precisely through his digressive style that his inventions take shape (1993I, 92-93). When Morris Croll, in his discussion of the loose style, cites Montaigne, who also wrote without a project or plan, – ‘J’écris volontiers sans project; le premier trait produit le second’ – he does so in order to illustrate the theory of the loose style, which I examined in the previous chapter:

Its purpose is to express, as far as may be, the order in which an idea presents itself when it is first experienced. It begins, therefore, *without premeditation*, stating its idea in the first form that occurs; the second member is determined by the situation in which the mind finds itself after the first has been spoken; and so on throughout the period, each member being an emergency of the situation. *The period* – in theory at least – *is not made; it becomes. It completes itself and takes on form in the course of the motion of mind which it expresses.* (Croll 1972, 111 – my italics)

Croll's description of the loose period can be extended to describe Marías' overall style, which here becomes more or less synonymous with his creative writing process. Marías' text begins without premeditation and becomes as he writes. This means that style and imagination are interwoven in an intricate relationship. This is what Benet says when he affirms that style provides the mature writer with a state of grace (1973, 38). The concepts of style and imagination overlap and cannot be isolated: neither can be discussed without, to some extent, explicitly or implicitly invoking the other.

And this is also how we can understand the workings of Marías' imagination. Croll says that the form of the loose period requires as description the metaphor of a chain, whose links join end to end, calling it the ‘ “linked or “trailing” period’ (1971,

111). This linking describes not only the formal aspect of the style, but also Marías' creative imagination, when, speaking of precisely 'una encadenación de elementos', he says that this process of writing creates links which surface as the narrative progresses (1993e, 261, 263). He attributes this linking to 'una facultad asociativa exacerbada, como una hipertrofia de la capacidad para ver la relación entre todas las cosas, para no ver nada fuera del extenso tejido que es el mundo' (1993e, 261). This is nothing other than the process of association attributed to the creative imagination, first introduced by Locke. Ribot speaks of associations as the formation of new combinations (1906). Armstrong calls it, in his study of Shakespeare's imagination, associative thinking and unconscious, unaware linking, without conscious intent and deliberate purpose (1946). For Hume this faculty of forming, uniting, and separating *is* the imagination (Wilbanks 1968). And for Schiller it is this process of the free association of ideas – 'die freye Ideenfolge' – which the imagination converts into aesthetic play by formalizing it (Schiller 1962, 407).

This process of association also explains how the initial fragments become enmeshed into the fabric that is the work. The imagination is a unifying, organizing force, as it 'labours to unify our experience of the world, through its power to make forms out of the formless', as Anne Wilson puts it, echoing both Marías and Schiller (Wilson 1983, 16); or, as Kevin Kerrane says when he traces Kant's influence to Coleridge: 'A work of art offers satisfaction through formal *unity*: because it is a product of the unifying imagination, it may be considered as a system of closely-knit internal relationships' (Kerrane 1971, 9).<sup>19</sup> This is also why any digressions within the narrative cannot be underestimated: like the seemingly insignificant fragments, digressions

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<sup>19</sup> See also Ribot (1906, esp. 79-90), Armstrong (1946, esp. 182-183), Wilbanks (1968, 170), and Starobinski (1970, 186-187).

acquire significance through their treatment and as an integral part of the system of closely-knit internal relationships that is the work.<sup>20</sup>

In this sense, the novel can also be conceived as the envelope created to house the initial fragments, lending further weight to the importance of the seemingly meaningless or insignificant (initial fragments): ‘No son pocas las ocasiones en que el edificio entero de una novela no tiene más misión ni más razón de ser que las de arropar y posibilitar una oración, unos párrafos, unas pocas páginas’ (Marías 1993h, 61). The novel, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, can thus be seen as a pretext created *a posteriori* – and therefore a *post-text* – to provide an abode for the initial inspiration. This is also what Benet affirms when he maintains that a literary composition needs to adapt to an external form, but inspiration rarely provides the writer with all the material required to fill this external form; this void, therefore, needs to be filled with material the writer produces in other ways, i.e. with the help of the imagination according to the present model (Benet 1973, 55).<sup>21</sup> For Benet, style becomes the vehicle by way of which the the fragment is blended into the whole and it furnishes the writer with a means or ‘film’ with the necessary sensitivity to be impressed with the writer’s images that escape reason (1973, 161-163).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> In his study of the use of parentheses in English verse, Lennard concludes that the importance of parentheses has long been obscured by the grammarians’ insistence that they are ‘additional, irrelevant, extraneous, subordinate, or damaging to the clarity of argument’ (Lennard 1991, 242). Laurence Sterne was very aware of the power of digressions, as his *Tristram Shandy* attests (as was Marías, who attempted to conserve the original punctuation in his translation as he states in the preface to the translation [Marías 1978b, xliii-xliv]); ‘Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine; — they are the life, the soul of reading’, as the narrator exclaims (Sterne 1967, 95).

<sup>21</sup> However, this does not mean that the insertion of the individual elements into the whole work is less significant. Quite the opposite is true: it is precisely the treatment of any material, its insertion into a complicated structure, its transformation, the subjective use to which it is put by the writer which matter (Ehrenzweig 1967, 51; Benet 1973, 139-140).

<sup>22</sup> Speaking initially of painting, Ehrenzweig makes the point that bisecting the work into the ‘significant’ figure and the ‘insignificant’ background is a misapprehension of the work: ‘In a work of art any element however paltry has to be firmly related to the total structure in a complex web of cross ties radiating across the entire picture plane. There is no decisive division between the gestalt or figure and mere background



This synthesis and interaction of imagination and style, or style conceived broadly enough to encompass the workings of the imagination, as in Benet's *La inspiración y el estilo*, is, I think, the key to understanding Marías' writing: his loose, digressive, errant style is the voice or vehicle of his imagination, blocking the conscious 'gestalt' need for precise visualization and rational planning and foresight, whilst providing the latter with the necessary freedom to invent.

## *II. The enactment of the imagination*

### *a) The dream*

*El hombre sentimental* is an exclusively first person narrative. Its narrator, a tenor called *el León de Nápoles*, wakes up one morning having had a dream. The dream consists of a series of events which took place four years previously in Madrid.<sup>23</sup> There is no difference in content between the dream of what happened four years previously and what actually occurred: the two are identical. The narrator decides to relate his dream by writing it out and he does this in the course of the day he had the dream, which he had in the morning (13).

Curiously, Marías has stated that, like Benet, he abhors and is disinterested in the recounting of dreams in novels, and outside them (Marías 1994b). One is therefore entitled to ask, firstly, why he should include a dream in his narration and, secondly, why a dream that merely reproduces a series of events which actually took place.

Citing Benet, Marías explains that the arbitrary character of the dream in a fictional work invalidates its content, rendering readers like Benet and himself

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elements' (1967, 21). The unifying power of the imagination is responsible for constructing this web, thus rendering a division between significant and insignificant elements impossible.

<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that this is Marías' first novel explicitly set in Spain (Madrid), although none of the characters is a resident of the city and all are temporary visitors.



indifferent to it (1994b). He points out that it is curious that this should not be the case with fictions themselves, as arbitrary as dreams, arguing that perhaps the task of the writer is to feign that something, which in reality is arbitrary, is not. It seems to me that dreams recounted in fictions may disinterest some readers because they demand far too much of a suspension of disbelief, thus annulling the unspoken agreement between the writer and the reader.

Oddly enough, the first sentence of *El hombre sentimental* is very similar to the formulas he detests: 'No sé si contaros mis sueños', says *el León* (13). What then is so special about this dream? Well, it is the fact that it is a precise replication of events lived by the narrator. For the narrator it becomes impossible to tell the two apart: 'Pero también es cierto que ahora no sé hasta qué punto estoy contando lo que ocurrió y en qué medida mi sueño de lo ocurrido, pese a que ambas cosas me parezcan la misma' (41). As the reality becomes indistinguishable from the dream, it is also contaminated by it, since it can no longer be an independent reference point, or the pure basis of narration, of representation. For *el León*, reality is no longer a point of comparison: 'Y anoche soñé lo que me sucedió hace cuatro años en la realidad, si es que este término sirve de algo o puede contraponerse a nada' (41).<sup>24</sup>

This indistinguishability is consciously further perpetuated by the narrator himself who starts recounting his dream on an empty stomach. *El León* tells us that a German writer once wrote that people who do not have breakfast want to remain under the influence of the dream and avoid contact with the day, thus allowing the nocturnal world to invade the diurnal one, for it is only after the second awakening, that of the stomach, that one enters the diurnal world and that one may safely recount a dream

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<sup>24</sup> On this invalidation of reality in Mariás' fourth novel see also Pittarello (1994a, 14-15) and de Toro (1995, 61-63).

without exposing oneself to the disastrous consequences of relating it without having had breakfast, because then one is betraying the dream and leaving oneself open to its revenge (41 - 42).<sup>25</sup> Through his fasting, *El León*'s artistic imagination thus 'holds body and soul in unresolved but fertile and dramatic tension' (Parkin 1978, 5).

This dream-like state, in which the narrator consciously conflates dream and reality as the basis of the storyline, is significant, not only because art has often been likened to a dream.<sup>26</sup> This state of 'day-dreaming' is not exactly that of the *hypnopompic* state preceding full wakefulness (see McKellar 1957, 32-50). Rather, it contains echoes of the state of mind in which the imagination is considered by many to operate and the processes of association operative therein, an idea most notable in Gustave Bachelard's notion of 'rêverie' – for Bachelard, this state, different from the night-dream, is that of the poetic imagination – as well as in Bergson's notion of aesthetic contemplation, which is equated to a dream-state as 'our soul forgets itself as in a dream to see and think with the poet' (Bachelard 1938, 1943, and 1948; Bergson 1910, 11; for an insightful introduction to Bachelard's notion of imagination see Forsyth [1971]; see also Kerrane [1971, 19-21]).<sup>27</sup> It also alludes to the most famous interpreter of dreams, Freud, both implicitly, by staging the dream and in the narrator's 'day-dreaming', which recalls Freud's famous essay on the creative imagination and his *Interpretation of dreams* (Freud 1971 and 1976), as well as explicitly, in a couple of passages in which the

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<sup>25</sup> The German writer referred to is Walter Benjamin, whom Mariás was reading at the time of writing his fourth novel, as Elide Pittarello tells us (1994a, 13). The passage Mariás paraphrases is from Benjamin's collection of aphorisms *Einbahnstraße* (Benjamin 1972, 86). In German the word for the state of having an empty stomach is *nüchtern*, in Spanish *en ayunas* or *en ayuno* (hence *desayuno*), and in French *à jeun* (the latter two deriving from the Latin *jejunos*, 'empty'; curiously, there is no term for this physical state in English, perhaps because fasting [*ayunar*] was not as significant).

<sup>26</sup> The processes of association in art and dreams have often been compared (for example, see Armstrong 1946, 56; Ehrenzweig 1967, 79; and Freud 1984c).

<sup>27</sup> Kerrane argues that Bergson's state is similar to Bachelard's *rêverie* in that one finds oneself in 'a heightened state of awareness and finely "focused" consciousness in which there is freedom from practical considerations' (Kerrane 1971, 20). This certainly also applies to *el León*'s contemplative-creative state.

narrator openly reflects on the night- and day-dream and the history of interpretations of the former, thus further contributing to the dream's thematization (39-42, 68-69).

*b) Errancy*

The narrator, like the author, embarks on an errant narration. In the novel's opening paragraph he announces that he does not know how any of his dreams – including the one he is about to recount – end:

Como si el impulso onírico quedara agotado en la representación de los pormenores y se desentendiese del resultado, como si la actividad de soñar fuese la única aún ideal y sin objetivo. No conozco, así, el final de mis sueños, y puede ser desconsiderado relatarlos sin estar en condiciones de ofrecer una conclusión ni una enseñanza. Pero a mí me parecen imaginativos y muy intensos. (13)

Thus, for *el León*, the act of narrating his dreams is as errant as the act of creating fictions is for Marías (note also the narrator's explicit reference to the imaginative quality of his dreams). The narrator reflects the writer's conception of narration or, possibly, he is the author's 'prophet', as Pittarello calls him, in that his conception of dreams prefigures or foreshadows Marías' conception of his literature (Pittarello 1994a, 11). It could also be that the metafictional aspect of his narrator's comment became evident to Marías in the process of writing, discovering it through his writing. Equally, he could already have been aware of his own errancy and thus consciously made his narrator enact it. In any case, it is significant that this errancy is actually explicitly voiced in one of Marías' novels for the first time, as it lends further credence to the supposition that *El hombre sentimental* is the first of his novels created in a wholly unpremeditated or free and imaginatively errant way. But the parallels between narrator and author do not stop here.

### c) Uncertainty

As is the case with Marías, the errancy is, in a sense, a result of the narrator's cultivated uncertainty or disinterest in certainty. It would seem that all of Marías' narrators, from *Travesía del horizonte* onwards, are more interested in uncertainty than certainty, thus thematizing the importance of uncertainty.<sup>28</sup>

So, *el León* prefers speculation, hypothesis, conjecture to certainty and he also seems to be as conscious as Marías is of the importance of creating uncertainty within the narrative in order to retain the reader's interest (see, for example, apart from the speculative nature of much of the narrative, the conjectural passages which consist solely of a series of questions the narrator poses [74-75] or the way in which the narrator maintains suspense by not revealing the outcome of the story he recounts until the very end, even giving the *dénouement* an added twist). He finds the state of uncertainty comforting: 'Me confortaba seguir ignorando lo que había ocurrido entre los Manur (*ese estado clemente de la incertidumbre*)' (153 – my italics). 'Qué cansado es lo concreto, lo que no tiene más remedio que tener contenido', he laments, after regretting having admitted a strong interest in Natalia to himself, precisely because it constitutes 'un tremendo inconveniente que me obligaba a actuar con un plan más o menos premeditado' (94-95). Equally, he finds fault with the city of Madrid because there is nothing uncertain about it, because it leaves no room for the imagination: 'Madrid', he deplores, 'parece tener prisa por decirlo todo', it does not afford its visitors or inhabitants

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<sup>28</sup> In Marías' second novel we saw the narrators' many conscious attempts to create uncertainty in their narrative by not revealing the many secrets. The interest in uncertainty would explain why in *El siglo*, for example, Casaldáliga loses interest in his wife, whom he married under the impression that she was suffering from a mortal illness which would make him a widower. Throughout his short marriage to Constanza, Casaldáliga awaits, anticipates, and imagines her death and his life after her death; however, as soon as he finds out that she suffers from no such illness and that she is in perfect health, he loses all interest in her.

la menor esperanza imaginativa o imaginaria de que pueda existir algo más – oculto, no expreso, omitido o nada más que contingente – de lo que se le ofrece impúdicamente en cuanto da unos pasos por sus calles sucias y asfixiadas. Madrid [...] no encierra misterio, y nada hay tan triste ni tan solitario como una ciudad sin enigma aparente o apariencia de enigma. (24-25)

What we are being told is that the creation and presence of uncertainty is important for the narrator (as reader, in the form of visitor to Madrid, or that of witness of other people's lives and, by implication, as author, in the construction of his narrative), and, as a metatextual comment, also for reader and author since, in both cases, it frees the imagination.

*d) Imagination as discovery*

We have seen that for Marías, writing is a vehicle for knowledge, understanding, and invention, in the sense of discovery ('Sólo en la escritura descubre [el escritor] que vio cosas que no sabía que vio hasta ese momento, que se fijó en detalles que le pasaron inadvertidos y que recupera o descubre para su escritura' [Marías 1994b, 25]). This is enacted by the narrator of his novel. As he is writing the story surrounding events in Madrid four years previously, he discovers and realizes things he did not know. On one occasion he also makes this process explicit, comparing a gradual comprehension to precisely the process Marías describes above. Hieronimo Manur has come to see the tenor in his hotel room to tell him to stop seeing his wife and whilst *el León* is writing out the scene four years later, he becomes aware that it was at that moment that he decided consciously to persevere in his efforts to usurp the Belgian banker's place, just as it was then that he grasped the situation (this he did become aware of at the time):

Sólo sé reproducir fragmentos de lo que contó Manur, pero si me exceptúo a mí mismo después (y no me puedo exceptuar), no he visto nunca a ninguna otra persona con tanta voluntad de perseverancia en su elección y en su amor. Es más,

ahora sé que fue Manur quien me contagió, o bien que fui yo quien se expuso a contaminarse o lo quiso imitar. Pues hasta entonces *sólo* había habido el deseo de seguir viendo a diario a Natalia Manur y el deseo de aniquilar a Manur. Y fue a partir de entonces cuando entendí mejor, del mismo modo que un hombre que escribe puede empezar a entender lo que escribe a partir de una frase casual que le hace saber – no de golpe, sino paulatinamente – por qué todas las anteriores fueron así, por qué fueron escritas de aquella manera (que aún no verá intencionada pero tampoco casual) cuando él creía estar tanteando tan sólo, jugando tan sólo con tinta y papel por matar el tiempo, por un encargo o por el sentido del deber que sienten los que no tienen ningún deber [...] Manur, con su inesperado ejemplo, me enseñó a perseverar: Manur perseveraba en su amor. (131 - 132)<sup>29</sup>

Inadvertently, Manur's visit has an effect contrary to the desired one: *el León* now knows that it was then that he became a persevering person, when he decided to persist in his efforts to supplant the Belgian. Again, the narrator of the novel echoes what the author has later explained. And, if the narrator is aware of and able to draw the analogy between his process of understanding and that of a certain type of writer – 'Y fue a partir de entonces cuando entendí mejor, del mismo modo que un hombre que escribe puede empezar a entender lo que escribe a partir de una frase casual' – then there can be no doubt that the author also knew this at the time. It may even be that this process of cognition was simultaneously duplicated if Marías, in a sense becoming contaminated by *el León* in the same way that the latter was infected by Manur, discovered that a writer can come to understand what he is writing *as* he was writing this passage in which the narrator discovers the analogy with this process.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, the process of transmission – a *mise-en-abîme* – takes place through writing itself. Imaginative writing seems to be the carrier of connections which lead to discoveries and realizations, to which Javier Marías' texts on, and practice of literature bear witness.

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<sup>29</sup> Note the character's use of *tanteando*, which echoes Marías' 'necesito ir tanteando' quoted above (Marías 1987b, ii).

<sup>30</sup> Equally, as a reader, just as Marías was contaminated by his narrator, I have in turn been infected by Marías, since I have realized that by writing about it, Marías apprehended this process of discovery as he was writing about his narrator's analogy.



e) *Love and imagination*

*El hombre sentimental* is, ostensibly, a love story. However, given that *el León*'s narrative exudes neither love, nor any warmth or affection, let alone passion, it is not unfair to say that his story contains no love. Rather, his narration is cold and distant, as he himself admits, belying perhaps the warmth of his relationship with Natalia Manur at the time:

El yo que existía antes de conocer a Dato y a los Manur ha estado ausente o amortiguado durante tanto tiempo, y aun habría dicho que había muerto de no ser porque esta mañana que avanza a la vez que yo escribo me parece estarlo reconociendo. En estas páginas que he ido llenando (sin haber desayunado aún) reconozco una voz fría e invulnerable, como las de los pesimistas, que, lo mismo que no ven ninguna razón para vivir, tampoco ven ninguna para matarse o morir [...] Mi cabeza era así (fría e invulnerable, y quizá vuelva a serlo a partir de hoy) antes de aquel viaje a Madrid. (58)

So, for a spell of four years, the duration of his amorous relationship with Natalia, the tenor had lost his accustomed coldness and we can only assume that it was during that time that he conveyed the love and warmth which, like Natalia herself, are not present in his narration. Curiously, these four years, starting with his meeting and falling in love with Natalia and ending with her leaving him before he awakes and commences the narration, are essentially omitted but for a few phrases and the first few days of their encounter in Madrid. The four years that make up the bulk of *el León*'s relationship with Natalia after the events in Madrid occupy less than three pages in the entire novel (147-150). In this light, these four years take on the shape of a parenthesis in *el León*'s life, especially as, in his narration, he seems to be recovering his characteristic sang-froid, absent during his time with Natalia. But it is his imagination which stops him from killing himself and allows him to recover his 'coldness'.



Manur commits suicide after Natalia leaves him. He had always made sure Natalia was present not only when they were at home in Brussels, but also on all his business trips, like the one to Madrid. He hired Dato to accompany and entertain her whilst he attended meetings and took care of his business during the day and always dined and retired for the day with his wife. When Natalia is no longer present after she leaves him for the tenor, Manur can no longer *imagine* his life without her, partly because he cannot imagine her, cannot make her present in her absence. Manur despairs and kills himself because his love for Natalia is firmly linked to the physical presence of the loved one. This physical presence of the loved one may have been necessary for Manur precisely because he knew only too well that Natalia did not love him, that, in a sense, she was not there for him, not present in her love for him in the first place, although he was patiently waiting for his love to be reciprocated. Her physical absence, therefore, made it doubly difficult for Manur to live without her: his imagination would now not only have to encourage him to hope she would one day love him, but, in addition to this, he would also have to make present the loved one herself. A now double absence would have to be overcome, the absence of love and the absence of the loved one; in any case an insurmountable obstacle for a somewhat unimaginative but surprisingly sentimental Belgian businessman. (It does come as a surprise to the reader that Manur kills himself when Natalia leaves him; he thus reveals a human, affectionate, and even weak aspect of his character that had not surfaced anywhere other than in his somewhat romantic hope that Natalia will one day love him.)

*El León*, on the other hand, does not encounter any such difficulties. His imagination goes to work from the very moment Natalia leaves him: his thought is immediately extended to the past in his narration, which is a recollection of his initial

encounter with Natalia and their relationship. We also learn in that narration that, in the past, his thought had also extended to the future, as he anticipated his relationship with Natalia and contemplated the possible ways of supplanting her then husband. This is an instance of the imagination's indispensable role in looking at the past and future, as Stevens has said.<sup>31</sup>

Hence, unlike Manur, *el León* does not commit suicide. His imagination goes to work in his making present the loved one in his remembrance of things past, just as he then had made present the loved one before she even became 'his'. In this way the imagination has a cathartic, emancipatory effect, allowing him to overcome the loss.<sup>32</sup> The faculty of imagination guarantees survival.

Consequently, unlike Manur, the tenor's love is not exclusively rooted in the presence of the loved one. Instead, it can flourish or survive in her absence through the help of imagination which makes it present either in his anamnesis or his anticipation.<sup>33</sup> In a sense, that is precisely the point made in *El hombre sentimental*: love is indissociably linked to imagination, something Marías makes explicit in the 1987 introduction to his fourth novel, where he states that love is to a large extent founded on anticipation and recollection, as it is

el sentimiento que exige mayores dosis de imaginación, no sólo cuando se lo intuye, cuando se lo ve venir, y no sólo cuando quien lo ha experimentado y lo ha perdido tiene necesidad de explicárselo, sino también mientras el propio amor se desarrolla y tiene plena vigencia. Digamos que es un sentimiento que exige siempre algo ficticio *además* de lo que le procura la realidad. Dicho con otras palabras, el amor tiene siempre un proyección imaginaria, por tangible o real que

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<sup>31</sup> 'We cannot look at the past or the future except by means of the imagination' (Stevens 1942, 144).

<sup>32</sup> The recourse to the imagination is a necessary condition of catharsis, as Starobinski observes (Starobinski 1970, 178-179).

<sup>33</sup> This role of imagination in love seems also to be underlined by the Hazlitt quotation introduced before the beginning of the narration and referring to the narrator: 'I think myself into love, and I dream myself out of it' (12). William Hazlitt is another poet for whom we are 'creatures of the imagination, passion, and self-will more than of reason or even of self-interest' (quoted by Abrams [1953, 141]).

lo creamos en un momento dado. Está siempre por cumplirse, es el reino de lo que puede ser. O bien de lo que pudo ser. (Marías 1987b, 71)<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the realms of love and fiction come to coincide in that they rely on imagination; in Marías terms they are both realms of that which could be or could have been.<sup>35</sup>

*f) Incarnating the potential*

The narrative of *El hombre sentimental* does not consist only of the relation of what occurred four years prior to the beginning of the narration based on the fusion of oneiric and non-oneiric material. Javier Marías has maintained that his fourth novel consists of three levels of narration: 'Lo vivido o acaecido, lo soñado y lo imaginado o supuesto' (Marías 1989d, 179). Although not false, this distinction is perhaps somewhat imprecise for our purposes. I would say there are at least six temporal levels of narration: 1) events that took place four years before the beginning of the narrative (*el León* meets and falls in love with Natalia, she leaves her husband and he commits suicide); 2) events that took place during the more immediate past, in particular the few months and weeks preceding the beginning of the narration (on pages 147 - 150 we are told of Natalia's increasing boredom and tiredness and her disinterest in *el León*, his singing, and the, for her, excessive travelling; during this time the narrator also receives a letter from Berta's husband – Berta being the woman *el León* was living with when he met Natalia – informing him of Berta's sudden and accidental death)<sup>36</sup>; 3) the dream of these past

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<sup>34</sup> See also Marías (1989c, 83).

<sup>35</sup> Compare his near-identical description of fiction quoted above (Marías 1993f, 122). The similarities or parallels of love with fiction, their shared reliance on imagination as the realms of that which could have been or of that which may be, allow Marías' and his narrator's imagination, their mental creative ability, to roam and err freely and have the possibility to make present that which could have been or may be (*never* that which was, because that is the job of those that wish to document reality).

<sup>36</sup> Uncertainty surrounds the name of Berta's husband, of whom *el León* only hears once the former has become a widower. Like Dato who is also called Dado in *El siglo* because the narrator does not remember with certainty, so, too, the Benetian device of using three names interchangeably – Noriega, Navarro, and Noguer – appears in *El hombre sentimental* (70 - 75 and 141 -145).

events; 4) the present (certain things occur in the time during which the narration is taking place and are related in the present tense: for example, the narrator receives another letter from Berta's widower or he decides to end his fasting and goes to have dinner in a restaurant); 5) events imagined but not lived by the narrator (there are two specific scenes, which we will be discussing, that the narrator describes in detail without having witnessed them); 6) and aphorisms (under this heading we could perhaps also include certain metanarrative passages, such as the ones quoted above, in which the narrator is reflecting on his own act of narrating [for example: 36, 41, 43] and the extended general reflections on the professions of opera singer and travelling salesman which the narrator compares [24 - 35]).<sup>37</sup> Levels 1, 2, and 4 correspond to Mariás' first level, levels 3 and 5 correspond to his second and third, and level 6 is either unaccounted for or may be included in his third level.

This fourth novel is the first which Mariás decided to write exclusively in the first person, the point of view chosen also for all his subsequent novels. The choice of a first person narration is closely related to the novel being the first created in a wholly unpremeditated or free and imaginatively errant way. The first person narration meant that the role of the imagination, for both author and narrator, became crucial, since the scope of the first person narrator is limited (he cannot know or see everything and he cannot be absent, since everything is always recounted by him), something of which Mariás was very well-aware (Mariás 1989d, 181). The imagination thus has to contribute to 'making present' areas which traditionally lie outside the perspective of the first person narrator. This explains the many conjectural passages, the speculative,

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<sup>37</sup> Aphorisms, characteristic of Mariás' novels from *El siglo* onwards, are interspersed throughout *El hombre sentimental* (for example: 'Las cosas que uno sabe es imposible saber si le interesa o no saberlas una vez que ya las sabe' [72]; 'Sólo hay una cosa más solitaria que morir sin que se entere nadie, y es morir sin enterarse uno mismo de lo que está ocurriendo' [73]; 'Lo que promete procura zozobra y atrae mucho más que lo que otorga o confirma' [116]).

hypothetical style of many parts of the narration. This process of the imagination, of making the absent, present, the unreal, real, and the possible or potential, incarnate, is nowhere better exemplified than in two particular instances in the novel.

To be precise, there are two examples of the same process when, by way of the imagination, that which *could have been* becomes, as far as the reader is concerned, that which *is*. The first one is a scene in the hotel bedroom of Hieronimo and Natalia Manur in which only the two of them are present, and in the second one, again in the same bedroom, only the banker is present. Given that the novel is narrated in the first person by *el León*, one may ask how the narrator is able to recount them if he is not present himself. In fact, the narrator witnesses neither of these scenes – he imagines them. They belong to what Marías has denominated the novel's third level of narration ('lo imaginado o supuesto') which corresponds to our fifth level ('events imagined but not lived by the narrator'). These scenes also bring to the surface the limitations of first person narration as they cannot take place anywhere other than in the first person narrator's imagination. In 'La muerte de Manur (Narración hipotética y presente de indicativo)' Marías has already written a short elucidation of these two scenes which sheds light on his intentions and their careful construction (Marías 1989 d). Since I consider these two scenes relevant to our discussion of imagination, I will also consider them, albeit very briefly, referring to his essay where appropriate.

In both these scenes the narrator makes present something which is not present. Arguably, the first scene begins when *el León* asks himself: '¿Cómo se puede aniquilar y suplantar a un hombre al que no se conoce apenas, del que poco se sabe y con quien no se tiene trato?' (76). In a certain way, the scene that follows this question, which was imagined by *el León* during the time in Madrid four years previously, is a first attempt

on the part of the tenor to supplant and annihilate Manur by imagining him, representing him in his hypothetical narrative. Like a writer, he thus exerts his power over Manur by making him one of his narrative's characters, which he then becomes again four years later in the narrative that frames this imagined scene. The actual hypothetical or conjectural narration begins, appropriately, with the adverb *quizá* and the use of the imperfect subjunctive: 'Quizá los ojos de color cognac del banquero de Flandes se abrieran instantáneamente al oír el ruido de la llave en la cerradura [...] quizá Manur [...] viera como Natalia dejaba la chaqueta y el bolso en una butaca' (80). Other adverbs and expressions of doubt, such as the ones mentioned in the previous chapter, like *acaso*, *tal vez*, and *puede ser*, coupled with the use of the imperfect subjunctive and the conditional tenses in subsequent questions ('¿Cómo entraría Natalia Manur en la habitación de lujo?' [81]) clearly set this passage apart from the other levels of narration: it does not form part of events that actually took place nor of the dream or the present. After three questions in which the conditional is used, the narrator reverts to a speculative future tense: '“Hola”, dirá quizá ella. Él estará ya acostado, con esas gafas *hipotéticas* puestas' (81– my italics). Then follows a question in which yet another tense – the perfect – is used: '“¿Qué tal te ha ido hoy todo? ¿Todo bien?”' (81). And from Natalia's next question onwards we are introduced to the tense used to describe this imaginary scene throughout the next eight pages: '“¿Los negocios como es debido?” Manur se baja los lentes sin llegar todavía a quitárselos y, mirando por encima de ellos con los ojos acostumbrados a ser mimados por las cosas del mundo, no contesta inmediatamente' (81). From this point onwards only the present tense is used, giving the impression that what is being recounted has in fact been witnessed by the narrator, although the reader has been alerted – but may not remember or care – that this scene is



imaginary because the use of the present tense has been preceded by the imperfect subjunctive, the conditional, the future, and the perfect tenses, all indicating the conjectural nature of this particular passage. Indeed, whilst using the present tense, Marías continues to point to its speculative nature by interspersing words and expressions that manifest uncertainty:

Parece más viejo con las gafas asomadas a la nariz, aunque puede que se las haya subido a la frente, como un aviador, y eso, por el contrario, lo rejuvenece [...] Manur aguza el oído, trata de percibir la caída del líquido sobre el otro líquido. O tal vez, en contra de sus deseos, no logra percibirlo. Natalia reaparece, apaga la luz del cuarto de baño [...] (pero no sé si las luces están encendidas o están apagadas o si queda sólo la lámpara de mesa a cuya luz Manur estudiaba). (81-82)

Gradually all signs of uncertainty disappear and the imaginary scene is recounted in the present tense, not as something that *could be* but as something that *is*.

The second conjectural passage follows the same structural lines as the first one. A statement by the narrator makes it clear that he was not present at the scene which he then goes on to invent: 'Yo no lo vi, quiero decir a Manur ensangrentado ni vendado ni convaleciente ni moribundo. Tampoco, por supuesto, muerto' (164). We already know that Manur has committed suicide by shooting himself in his hotel bedroom in Madrid. *El León's* imaginary passage is introduced at the end of the novel which coincides with the end of the narration as evening falls on the day he commenced it, whilst it becomes very clear to him that Natalia has left him, just as she left Manur four years previously. It is at this moment that the tenor imagines the Belgian's suicide. The conjectural passage again begins with expressions of uncertainty and the imperfect subjunctive: 'Puede que Manur llegara cansado a su habitación al empezar a declinar la tarde [...] Puede que [...] encendiera con el mando a distancia y mirara la televisión a solas' (165). After the fifth *puede que* the rhythm is broken and, following a single use of the perfect subjunctive,

we are introduced to the conjectural future tense: ‘Pero quizá no haya llegado a cambiarse de ropa ni a ponerse esa bata, porque en ese armario habrá visto [...] muchos de los vestidos dejados atrás por Natalia Manur’ (166). And then, after another sentence in which the conjectural future tense is used, comes the use of the present tense:

Quizá Manur habrá tocado esos vestidos con sus dedos un poco gordos, a lo mejor los habrá besado con sus abultados labios o habrá restregado su rostro de facciones bastas contra las telas olorosas e inertes, y un poco de barba (debe repasársela al anochecer, si sale) impide que éstas se deslicen suavemente sobre sus mejillas. Manur ve caer la tarde: abre el balcón para ver mejor la manera en que cae la tarde. (166)

From here onwards no uncertainty is introduced and the imaginary scene of Manur’s suicide is written in the present tense. Again, *el León*’s imagination makes present a scene he did not witness, a scene that could have unfolded the way it is described. But this is not all. Javier Marías’ intention in both those conjectural passages, as he makes explicit in ‘La muerte de Manur’, was to give them an appearance of truth. That is to say, he wanted these two imaginary scenes to be remembered as scenes pertaining to his and our first level of narration, namely events that took place: ‘Y yo espero que para los lectores de *El hombre sentimental* Manur muriera efectivamente así, cuando la verdad es que nadie, más que él mismo, sabe cómo tal cosa llegó a ocurrir’ (Marías 1989d, 189). Like his second and our third level, that of the dream material, he attempted to make this level as true or as real as that of the events that took place. It seems to me that he achieves this aim without really misleading the reader about the non-truth of the passages. The present tense may be deemed to be misleading since it is normally used to describe the way things *are*. However, Marías uses it very cautiously and briefly as it is introduced only after a number of other tenses alerting the reader as to the imagined nature of the passage. And maybe this was the challenge for him: to make the reader

remember these two scenes as scenes which actually occurred, despite the knowledge and the warnings that they were created in the mind of *el León*.

The fact that this is achieved bears witness to the powers of the imagination the two scenes illustrate: the imagination here becomes ‘the power of the mind over the possibilities of things’ (Stevens 1942, 136), that which allows us to imagine what might be the case (Aristotle 1965, 43), to conceive ‘of the absent as if it were present’ (Leavis 1950, 60), and conceive of situations and explore ‘circumstances beyond the owner’s experience and which may never have existed’ (Wilson 1983, 16). Moreover, these two scenes, as far as they stage a process involved in the writing of literature, enact ‘the power of literature to liberate the imagination from confinement to present circumstances’ (Gardner 1982).

### *The autonomy of literature*

The likening of the narrator’s dream-like state with that of imaginative activity, his errancy, the twofold role of uncertainty in his account, the process of discovery (invention), the centrality of imagination in love and the latter’s consequent equation with fiction, and the ability to represent potential or absent realms are elements in the novel which contribute to the enactment of the workings of the imagination and mirror Javier Marías’ own creative processes. His creative imagination, coupled with and aided by an errant and digressive style of writing and a narration in the first person, invents a work which performs the workings of the imagination. The author’s and the work’s imagination together underline the supreme importance of the imagination in Javier Marías’ novels.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The importance accorded the creative imagination is also something which sets many post-1970 Spanish writers apart from most of their immediate literary predecessors. Masoliver Ródenas has argued that the

This significance of the imagination in Marías' work has certain wider implications. The workings of the imagination are founded on a radical freedom: from reason, from practical considerations, from intellectual, moral, or any other deliberate purpose.<sup>39</sup> Immanuel Kant was the first to assert the complete independence of the imagination in aesthetic creativity and, since Kant, both the creation and the response to art have been described as an experience of freedom, as, through the imagination, art liberates reality and expands our understanding 'when its potential becomes manifest in the work' (Falk 1971, 286). For Kant, the creative imagination is the faculty of presenting aesthetic ideas.<sup>40</sup> These ideas are not theses or messages; hence, the only adequate expression of a work of art is the work itself (Kerrane 1971, 7).<sup>41</sup> Art has its own ontology, it is the result of the 'free play of the imagination' (Kant 1924, section 51, 176).<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the only proper mode of considering a work of art is 'aesthetic judgment', which is not teleological but aesthetic and therefore 'disinterested', as it does

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importance bestowed on the imagination is what sets the *novísimos* apart from much writing under Franco, which is characterized by a 'falta de imaginación' (Masoliver Ródenas 2000). The absence of imaginative writing in Spain was also lamented by Juan Benet over thirty years ago (1969, 19). The respective importance granted the imagination also explains the limited range of writing under Franco and an increased post-1970 range, something to which I referred in the Introduction. The significance of the creative imagination seems to be inversely proportionate to the degree of 'realism', for the reasons first introduced by Kant. An examination of the imagination would therefore be a useful way of comparing the novel under Franco and post-1970 fiction.

<sup>39</sup> It is this liberty which is quintessential for the writer. Expressing his agreement with Virginia Woolf, Armstrong has said of Shakespeare's poetry: '[It] could flow forth unimpeded because he was not concerned to protest or preach', later adding that the imagination's 'finest achievements are attained when it is most free' (Armstrong 1946, 171, 182). Stevens calls the imagination 'the liberty of the mind' (1942, 138). And Joseph Conrad has called 'liberty of the imagination [...] the most precious possession of a novelist' (Allott 1959, 132). In Marías, too, we have seen how his imagination operates free from any constraints.

<sup>40</sup> 'Unter einer ästhetischen Idee aber verstehe ich diejenige Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft, die viel zu denken veranlaßt, ohne daß ihr doch irgendein bestimmter Gedanke, d.i. Begriff, adäquat sein kann, die folglich keine Sprache völlig erreicht und verständlich machen kann' (Kant 1924, section 49, 167-168).

<sup>41</sup> Marías echoes Kant's idea when he asserts that the words that make up a novel are not interchangeable (Marías 1993l, 93).

<sup>42</sup> Schiller extends Kant's notion of play (*Spiel*) 'by calling attention to properties that works of art have in common with certain kinds of games: a lack of intellectual or moral "purpose", and a balance between free movement and formal limits' (Kerrane 1971, 11; see Schiller 1962, esp. 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> letter, 355-360 and 404-412).

not predicate a phenomenon in terms of something beyond itself, ( it is 'a judgment in which the phenomenon is considered in, of, by, and for itself'[Kerrane 1971, 8; Kant 1924, 'Einleitung', 6-35, and, section 2, 40-41]).

Through the importance accorded the imagination and its workings in the process of creating *El hombre sentimental* and in its enactment within the narrative itself, a high degree of autonomy of the imagination in aesthetic creativity is postulated and a disinterested reading, which can follow the free play of the imagination and which vitiates the teleological aspects of literature, is demanded.

## Chapter IV

### *Todas las almas:* Imagining the autobiographical

*Todas las almas*, Javier Marías' fifth novel, is one which invites an autobiographical reading. As one may be made aware by information contained in the blurb of the jacket flap of some of the novel's editions, or from other sources, Javier Marías spent two academic years teaching at the University of Oxford before eventually returning to Madrid. The two most important factors that seem to invite an autobiographical reading of *Todas las almas* are that the novel is set in Oxford and that its first person narrator and protagonist is a nameless Spaniard who spent two academic years at the University teaching Spanish literature and language and who recounts his experiences in Oxford two and a half years later, after having returned to Madrid.

In this chapter I will address the question of autobiography and fiction. The way this question arises out of his fifth novel is relevant to Javier Marías' novelistic development for two reasons: firstly, more than in any other novel, it foregrounds the novelist's awareness of the importance of formal and generic considerations which affect the reading of a novel and, secondly, it is the most clear example of the importance of the stylistic and concomitant imaginative processes involved in Marías' treatment of matter originating outwith the work itself (in empirical or existing reality). I will show that reading *Todas las almas* as an autobiographical novel is a misreading and not true to its nature. Instead, I suggest it be viewed in the light of the author's inclusion in his fiction of biographical elements without, however, in any way privileging this material over other. What becomes apparent in *Todas las almas* is that biographical information is incorporated into the novel in the



same way as material from other sources, that is to say, it is submitted to the same process of fictionalization through the interplay between imagination and style. Hence, we shall see that what is of importance, as far as the narrative is concerned, is not *what* the nature or origin of the material is, but *how* it is enmeshed, the way in which it is woven into the narrative fabric. Thus, foregrounding the autobiographical aspects of the novel not only reveals little about Javier Marías' self: it also discloses little about a narrative in which the biographical is only one element amongst others, equivalent and unprivileged.

After a brief introduction to certain views of what constitutes autobiography, the first part of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the importance of contextual markers which determine the type of reading, the relationship between the novel's narrator and author and that between other characters and living persons, and the ontological status of the novel. The second part is dedicated to an analysis of the imaginative and stylistic aspects and processes that determine the construction and nature of the narrative.

## I.

### a) *The question of autobiography*

Before we proceed, I should like to draw attention to certain elements of the discussions surrounding autobiographical writing which are pertinent to this chapter, such as fiction, intention, the role of the imagination, and style.

Towards the end of the 19th century Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: 'The danger of the direct questioning of the subject *about* the subject and of all self-reflection of the spirit lies in this, that it could be useful and important for one's activity to interpret oneself *falsely*' (Nietzsche 1967, 272). Although this annuls the possibility of any autobiographical undertaking, it has neither put a stop to autobiographical

writing nor to writing on autobiographical writing. In spite of Nietzsche, practice, criticism, and theory of autobiography have flourished before and since then. In fact, many literary critics have read Nietzsche's invalidation as the justification of seeing autobiography as yet another literary genre because all experience is seen as a textual construct and therefore fictional, thereby blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction (Marcus 1994, 201). This is essentially also what Scholes and Kellogg assert: 'The convergence of the novel with history, biography, and autobiography has resulted not so much from impatience with the story-teller's fantasy as from a modern scepticism of knowing about human affairs in an entirely objective (non-fictional) way' (Scholes and Kellogg 1966, 151). Like Nietzsche, but for different reasons, Paul de Man also does not believe in the autobiographical project. In 'Autobiography as de-facement' he attempts to show that autobiography does not exist as a genre and argues that far from being a genre or mode, it is a figure of reading (de Man 1984, 67-81). Javier Marías partakes of this more sceptical approach to autobiographical writing, as we shall see.<sup>1</sup>

However, some, like the historian George Misch and the philosopher Georges Gusdorf still believe – bracketing Nietzsche – in the existence or possibility of an original, authentic, and 'proper' autobiography, an account of a person's life by that person, which they differentiate from *literary* autobiography, that is to say autobiography seen as a literary genre (Gusdorf 1980, Marcus 1994, 6). Similarly, for Jean Starobinski the existence of autobiographical writing is possible, since it is through the particularities of style that the genre can be delimited: autobiographical style 'offers us a system of revealing indices, of symptomatic traits. The redundancy of style is individualizing: it singles out [...] No matter how doubtful the facts related, the text will at least present an "authentic" image of the man who "held the

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<sup>1</sup> This scepticism is also explicitly manifested in *Negra espalda del tiempo* (Marías 1998a, 10).

pen””(Starobinski 1980, 75). Others see autobiography as neither fictive nor non-fictive, ‘a purely fragmentary, incomplete literary project’ (Renza 1980, 295).

John Pilling highlights the role of imagination and creation in autobiography (Pilling 1981), a very important factor in our consideration of *Todas las almas*.

Michael Sprinker maintains that ‘the origin and the end of autobiography converge in the very act of writing [...] for no autobiography can take place except within the boundaries of a writing where concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text’ (Sprinker 1980, 342).

Another significant element in considerations of autobiographical writing and relevant to our discussion is intention. Intention is regarded as a very important factor in autobiographical writing: not only authorial intention, but also the intention indicated by a whole series of contextual marks which surround the text and determine the way it should be received. This, according to Philip Lejeune, leads to the establishment of an autobiographical pact and the marks surrounding a text, which determine what Elizabeth Bruss calls its illocutionary force, borrowing the terms from philosophers of language like Searle, Austin, and Strawson, therefore acquire a primary importance (Lejeune 1975, Bruss 1976). Also, as Laura Marcus points out, intention is often used to resolve the problem of referentiality, so that it is not important whether autobiographical truth is verifiable or not; the intention to tell the truth is considered to be a sufficient guarantor of the autobiographical ‘veracity’ and ‘sincerity’ (Marcus 1994, 3). Generally speaking and despite de Man and Nietzsche, ‘the impetus behind a lot of contemporary criticism has been the desire to see autobiography recognised as a specifically literary genre in its own right’ (Marcus 1994, 6).

As the word *autobiography* itself partly suggests<sup>2</sup>, any discussion of autobiography and autobiographical writing is bound to touch on the above areas, which are implicated in it. The question of author and narrator/protagonist, the scepticism surrounding objective knowledge, the realms of fact, fiction, and literature, the function and effects of intention, and, not least, the role of style and the creative imagination in autobiography are therefore all interwoven into the present discussion.

*b) On the importance of the mark of belonging*

The identity of author and main character or protagonist (and narrator, if different from protagonist, which is not the case in *Todas las almas*) is, according to Philippe Lejeune, the central tenet of autobiographical discourse: 'Pour qu'il y ait autobiographie (et plus généralement littérature intime), il faut qu'il y ait identité de l'auteur, du narrateur et du personnage' (Lejeune 1975, 15). This identity of author and protagonist, argues Lejeune, is the result of their identification through their *proper name*. That is to say, autobiographical discourse presupposes that the name of the author is also that of the protagonist. The name of the author is the one that figures on the cover and the title page, and for Lejeune this name is the incarnation of the author, the person responsible for the text's enunciations because it is socially linked to a real person.<sup>3</sup>

The distinction between *enunciation* (*énonciation*) and *utterance* (*énoncé*) was first made by Émile Benveniste in his *Problèmes de linguistique générale* when he distinguished between the act of uttering and the content of the utterance

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<sup>2</sup> From the Greek *autos* (self), *bios* (life), and *graphe* (writing).

<sup>3</sup> Curiously, Lejeune situates the author's name featured above or below the title inside the book on the 'page de garde' which is the flyleaf, endleaf or endpaper, a page often blank or, in French publications, also functioning as the half-title page (Lejeune 1975, 22-23). This page is not to be confused with the title page which is the one Lejeune is referring to, it seems to me. In any case, the important thing is that all of these pages do not belong to the text proper of the book, but to the *exergue*.

(Benveniste 1966). Autobiographical theory has relied on this distinction to establish a difference between the subject of the enunciation, the narrator or 'I' of the narration, and the subject of the utterance, the narrated 'I' whose story is recounted. However, the idealized autobiography of pure consciousness, in which the subject is always only one, does not allow for this split. The name of the author on the cover or the title page of the book is the signature which gives the contract legal authority.

It has to be said that Lejeune has been criticized for failing to distinguish between signature and proper name and for merely shifting the (transcendental) authority of the subject from author to reader, as, in his scheme, the latter is empowered and becomes the instance that judges whether the contract has been honoured (see for example de Man 1984, 71-72 and Marcus 1994, 190-228). In addition, Michel Foucault, in his essay 'What is an author?', has questioned the direct correspondence between proper name and author's name, arguing that the author should not be equated with the real writer, and that this distance between author and real writer is what gives rise to the author-function which limits the freedom of fiction (Foucault 1988, 197-210). In any case, Lejeune calls this the 'social contract' which constitutes the autobiographical pact which in turn makes possible the autobiographical reading and hence autobiographical discourse.

The autobiographical pact also involves a referential pact: Lejeune defines biography and autobiography in opposition to fiction in that he sees them as *referential* texts, since they aim to provide information on a reality exterior to the text (Lejeune 1975, 36). 'Leur but n'est pas la simple vraisemblance,' says Lejeune, 'mais la ressemblance au vrai. Non "l'effet du réel", mais l'image du réel' (1975, 36). Thus, autobiography presupposes primarily identity on the level of enunciation and then resemblance on the level of utterance.

Consequently, in accordance with Lejeune's definition, *Todas las almas* is certainly not an autobiography: even though there may be some resemblance in the content of the novel to the real world, the protagonist's name is not the author's. To be more precise, the narrator and protagonist of the novel remains nameless throughout. We only learn that he is *not* called Emilio (Marías 1989a, 141).<sup>4</sup> For Lejeune, identity of protagonist and author is essential: 'L'héro peut ressembler autant qu'il veut à l'auteur: tant qu'il ne porte pas son nom, il n'y a rien de fait' (25).

However, we will see that resemblances between protagonist and author can be detected and, if detected, identity between protagonist and author may be suspected. According to Lejeune, this type of narrative is an autobiographical novel:

Ces textes entreraient donc dans la catégorie du "roman autobiographique": j'appellerai ainsi tous les textes de fiction dans lesquels le lecteur peut avoir des raisons de soupçonner, à partir des ressemblances qu'il croit deviner, qu'il y ait identité de l'auteur et du *personnage*, alors que l'auteur, lui, a choisi de nier cette identité, ou du moins, de ne pas l'affirmer. (Lejeune 1975, 25)

Marías pertains to precisely the latter category of author, as he has neither denied nor explicitly asserted the identity of author and protagonist. Observe that for Lejeune, the difference between autobiography and autobiographical novel is the difference between certainty regarding identity and uncertainty or suspicion, which is what Marías consciously introduces and on which he capitalizes.

But this is not all. Lejeune further differentiates the texts in which the name of the protagonist is not known (1975, 28-35). Depending on the nature of the pact established by the author (autobiographical, novelistic, nonexistent), Lejeune maintains there are three alternatives if the protagonist is nameless: a) for a text with a nameless narrator to be considered an autobiography, the author must have explicitly established his identity with the protagonist/narrator either in a title which

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<sup>4</sup> All references are to the original Anagrama edition of the novel in 1989, unless otherwise indicated.



would leave no room for doubt (*A history of my life, Autobiography*) or in a preface, thus instituting an autobiographical pact; b) if a text with a nameless narrator makes its fictional nature explicit, for example the word *novel* appears after the title, this constitutes a novelistic pact; c) if no pact is instituted and the protagonist is nameless, then there is total uncertainty; ‘le lecteur, selon son humeur, pourra le lire dans le registre qu’il veut’ (Lejeune 1975, 29). If we consider *Todas las almas* in the light of this model we shall come to an interesting and perhaps somewhat surprising conclusion.

*Todas las almas* is not bound by an autobiographical pact; the author at no point, either in the title or in a preface (there is none), claims identity of the nameless protagonist/narrator and of himself. Therefore, *Todas las almas* is either a novel, in which case we will need to find the novelistic pact, or there is no pact and it is a text shrouded in uncertainty, an uncertainty which may indeed be the ambiguousness producing the undecidability in which, as we shall see, Marías would like to situate the reader or Lejeune’s liberating uncertainty, which would make the reading entirely and solely dependent on the reader’s mood.

In any case, it will have become clear that Lejeune’s argument is founded not on what forms part of the text, but on what is outside it: in the legal sphere, where the existence of the author as a real person and not a mere name should be verifiable, and also in the actual book, but preceding or outside the text constituting the content, on the cover page, the title page, or the preface where information as to the nature of the pact is sought.

It may seem trivial, but the contextual markers which always determine the reception of any text by designating its genre are not merely necessary, but arguably give rise to literature.<sup>5</sup> These marks determine how a text is received; they compose

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<sup>5</sup> In his essay ‘La huella del animal’ Marías shows an acute awareness of the importance of these marks: ‘El acto de leer literatura nos parece tan natural que solemos olvidar que ese acto depende de

its illocutionary force. (These illocutionary marks are also why, in the case of a fictional piece of work, what is recounted does not constitute ‘lies’, as is often claimed with regard to fiction; a lie is to speak untruthfully with the intention to deceive and a fictional piece of work can never do that, simply because it is framed by these marks, making any attempt at deception impossible, in that they clarify that it is a fiction and, therefore, that what it contains is not to be misconstrued as a literal and referential truth.) As John Searle says in his discussion of fiction in terms of speech acts in ‘The logical status of fictional discourse’,

there is no textual property, syntactical or semantic, that will identify a text as a work of fiction. What makes it a work of fiction is, so to speak, the illocutionary stance that the author takes towards it, and the stance is a matter of the complex illocutionary intentions that the author has when he writes or otherwise composes it. (Searle 1979, 65-66)

I would qualify what Searle says by adding that the illocutionary action of a text is not solely determined by authorial intention, although intention is very important. Lejeune’s pacts foreground the tacit agreements which a reader consciously or unconsciously enters into before reading a text and their particular importance for autobiography.

Borrowing the notion of illocutionary action developed in particular by Searle, Elizabeth Bruss argues that literature, like speaking, which is made up of different types of actions (asserting, commanding, promising, questioning), consists of a series of actions which, in its case, are genres and which constitute its illocutionary force:

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una serie de convenciones sin las cuales sería poco menos que imposible. Esas convenciones las tenemos tan incorporadas a nuestras costumbres que las activamos de manera automática y sin pensar [...] Cuando abrimos un libro – una novela –, no se nos oculta que eso es creación o producto de un individuo como nosotros, con nuestra misma materialidad; es más, tal cosa se nos recuerda en la cubierta, donde leemos su nombre; en la solapa, donde a menudo están su foto y algunos datos biográficos; en la portadilla, donde vuelve a aparecer su nombre; en la contracubierta, donde se nos suele hablar a claras de las excelencias del trabajo realizado por ese nombre y ese rostro’ (Marías 1994b, 25).

The genre does not tell us the style or construction of a text as much as how we should expect to 'take' that style or mode of construction – what force it should have for us. And this force is derived from the kind of action that text is taken to be. Surrounding any text are implicit contextual conditions, participants involved in transmitting and receiving it, and the nature of these implicit conditions and the role of the participants affects the status of the information contained in the text. Literature as well as 'ordinary language' [...] has its 'illocutionary' dimension. (Bruss 1976, 4-5)

The difference between Searle and Bruss is that whereas Searle restricts his discussion to fiction, which he differentiates from literature, and also makes the author wholly responsible for the illocutionary force of a text, Bruss talks about literature and autobiography and expands the notion of 'illocutionary force'.

Following Lejeune's, Searle's, and Bruss' arguments, it can be affirmed that these illocutionary acts and, in particular, the mark which effects the association between a text and a context are indispensable, especially in literature, because the text itself, its content or narrative, style or structure cannot satisfactorily and unequivocally explain how it is to be taken, what its illocutionary force is, what type of text it is, what genre it belongs to.<sup>6</sup>

There is no better way of highlighting the supreme importance of the mark which determines the illocutionary force we normally take for granted than the consequences of missing this all-important mark. These, for example, included widespread fear and panic, frustrated suicides and abortions on the night of 30 October 1938 in the United States and Canada when, in a radio transmission, it was announced that the Martians had landed in New Jersey. What the panic-stricken population had missed was the mark of this radiophonic text, the announcement

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<sup>6</sup> I am aware that this is obviously a much discussed and potentially contentious assertion. Nevertheless, is there an intrinsic quality in, for example, a 'non-fictional autobiography' that would clearly distinguish it from a novel? A contemporary example in support of a negative answer to this question, but one which, for reasons of space I cannot discuss at length, would be William Boyd's *The new confessions*, which is presented throughout the narrative as the autobiography of John James Todd (1987). There is nothing within the narrative proper that would give any real indication that this is anything other than the autobiography of someone called Todd. The only reason the reader knows this is not the case is because of the extratextual marks, such as the author's name on the front cover (which is not that of the narrator's), the title (through its allusions to Rousseau), or the information contained on the back cover (which identifies the book as a novel).

made *before* the transmission that what was to follow was nothing other than a version of H. G. Wells' novel the *War of the worlds*. Without the mark, the text itself was unable to indicate that it was an adaptation of a novel produced and read by Orson Welles – the text proper could not communicate its own status or genre.

Jacques Derrida's essay 'The law of genre' is, in part, an exploration of the nature of this mark, which lends a text its illocutionary force and makes it participate in one or more genres (Derrida 1981). 'What interests me', says Derrida,

is that this re-mark [...] is absolutely necessary for and constitutive of what we call art, poetry, or literature [...] Can one identify a work of art, of whatever sort, but especially a work of discursive art, if it does not bear the mark of a genre, if it does not signal or mention it or make it remarkable in any way? (1981, 60)

His answer to his own question is negative, and he goes on to affirm that 'this supplementary and distinctive trait, a mark of belonging or inclusion, does not properly pertain to any genre or class. The re-mark of belonging does not belong', although it does 'take on a great number of forms and can itself pertain to highly diverse types' (Derrida 1981, 60-61).

So, for example, the designation 'novel' below the title on the cover or the title page is not itself 'novelistic', and the term 'autobiography' on the back cover does not belong to the genre it designates, simply because it does not form part of the text proper. Yet, the importance of this mark, which is also an *exergue* in that it is situated outside the text proper,<sup>7</sup> cannot be exaggerated and a reading of *Todas las almas* cannot ignore the *exergue* since it is determined by it.

If readings are dependent on the *exergue* then in the case of Marías' fifth novel the reading and the pact may vary according to the publication. The first publication in 1989 is the Spanish equivalent of a hardback edition by Anagrama.<sup>8</sup> In

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<sup>7</sup> *Exergue*: from the Greek *ex*, meaning 'outside', and *ergon*, 'work'.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that for a long time the distinction in Spain between hardback and paperback editions has not been as clear as in Britain or the US, at least not for fiction. Recently, in the 1990s in particular, a number of publishers and especially the bigger publishing houses (Anagrama, Alfaguara,

the blurb on the jacket flap (which is not a jacket flap strictly speaking in that it is not part of the dust jacket – there is none – but of the cover proper folded over) we are told the author has taught Spanish at Oxford University. This information, if read, could make the text fall under the third of Lejeune's categories in which total uncertainty governs the reception by the reader who may read it as he pleases, as pure fiction or autobiographical novel, or indeed, may be caught between the two in Marías' desired state of permanent undecidability discussed below.

After going through a number of re-prints in the same format, *Todas las almas* was published in 1993 in a different collection, again by Anagrama. *Compactos Anagrama* is a Spanish equivalent of the paperback. This edition is different in that it is somewhat smaller, and there is no blurb because there is no jacket flap. Therefore, there is less room for general information and information on the author normally found in the blurb has been included in the lower half of the back cover. There we are told of Javier Marías' other novels and of the survey of 60 critics, writers, and publishers undertaken in 1992 by the newspaper *El País* which revealed that *Todas las almas* was considered the second best Spanish novel published between 1975 and 1991. But there is no mention of the author's stay in Oxford. This is possibly due to the lack of space of this edition.

However, the lack of information on the author's stay in Oxford in the exergue makes the identification of protagonist/narrator and author less likely. And the information on the back of the cover twice calls the text in hand a novel: in the mention of the results of the survey and in a translation of a quotation from a British review of the English translation of the novel, where Michael Kerrigan calls *Todas las almas* 'una deslumbrante novela de Oxford'.<sup>9</sup> (In fact, the original or working

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Espasa Calpe) have begun to produce cheaper editions of books already published, albeit quite a few years after the original and more expensive edition.

<sup>9</sup> See Kerrigan (1992, 21).

title of *Todas las almas* was precisely *La novela de Oxford*, and this also became the title of the French translation, *Le roman d'Oxford*, because the final Spanish one did not translate well into French, and this Spanish title was suggested to Marías by a Spanish colleague.<sup>10</sup> However, the inclusion of the word *novel* in the actual title would perhaps have made this too undisguised a mark, making the reader suspect that under this conspicuous denomination lay anything but a novel.) These exergual marks lessen the uncertainty regarding the genre of the text, and the reader is therefore encouraged to enter into a novelistic pact, more so than in the hardback edition.

The exergue of the English translation of the novel published in 1992 is of a different and very unusual kind. On the flyleaf or endleaf of the Harvill (Harper Collins) publication the usual information on Marías is included and we are told about his stay as a lecturer at Oxford. What follows is the title page and then the page of the dedications, which in both Spanish editions was the last page before the text proper. In the English edition, however, an added page has been introduced between the text and its outside. It reads as follows:

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Given that both the author and narrator of this novel spent two years in the same post at the University of Oxford, some statement may be in order on the part of the former, before he finally yields the floor to the latter, to the effect that any resemblance between any character in the novel (including the narrator, but excluding "John Gawsworth") and any other person living or dead (including the author, but excluding Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong) is purely coincidental as is any resemblance between any event in the story and any historical event past or present.

J.M.

(Marías 1992b)

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<sup>10</sup> For a reason that escapes me, the contemporary writer Álvaro Pombo advised Marías, without having read the novel, that 'una novela que pasa en Oxford ha de titularse por fuerza *Todas las almas*, trate de lo que trate' (Marías 1998a, 291-292).



This is a very curious insertion indeed: an explicit disclaimer by the author, similar to those which often appear after film credits, negating any relationship between the novel and reality, thus expressly asserting the former's fictionality. No mark could be more explicit than this.

What it is essentially saying is that the text that follows should be read as a novel (novelistic pact). Consequently, the British publication of Marías' narrative goes further than the two Spanish editions in its explicit demand to enter into a novelistic pact with the reader. In any case, it may be argued that a reading of *Todas las almas*, as of any work of this nature, depends to a great extent on the exergue and there is no one possible reading of this novel, but potentially three different ones, since a reading is dependent on the illocutionary force or the nature of the pact entered into which may differ with the differing exergues in the various editions altering its illocutionary force.

However, the case of this last exergue or mark raises a number of issues. On the one hand, this disclaimer undoes Marías' attempt at ambiguity, since it leaves no room for uncertainty: the narrator is not the author and any similarities between the two and any other characters and real persons (except for Gawsworth and Fytton Armstrong) are purely coincidental, Marías tells us.<sup>11</sup> Of course we know that strictly speaking this is not true: the similarities between author and narrator/protagonist are intentional, precisely because a state of indetermination was sought by Marías, as are some of the similarities between other characters and real people. On the other hand, even if, as readers, we were not aware of the author's intentions nor of any points of contact between the text and reality, this disclaimer unwittingly, or wittingly, if it is taken to be a *paralepsis*, makes us aware of and attentive to this possibility, inviting

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<sup>11</sup> The quotation marks surrounding the former name are probably due to the fact that Gawsworth and Fytton Armstrong are one and the same person and 'Gawsworth' was this person's pseudonym. The discussion of this character later on will shed more light on this matter.

instead the suspicious reader, which we all are, according to Lejeune and Marías, to do precisely what it urges us not to do.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, this disclaimer presents an added complication which is probably unintentional: although separate identities of author and narrator are maintained, the note says that ‘author and narrator spent two years in the same post at the University of Oxford’. Now, the author and the narrator can have spent two years in the same post in Oxford only if a) they are one and the same person, b) they are different but real people who both occupied the same post successively (in which case Javier Marías is indicating that he is writing a biographical account of someone else’s residence in Oxford, for example, Molina Foix’s or de Azúa’s, or even one of his successors’, perhaps),<sup>13</sup> or c) they are both distinct fictional characters. Strictly speaking, the fact that one is real and the other fictional does not satisfactorily explain the formulation, since the use of ‘same’ refers to one post, which, at best, would conflate the two worlds, precisely something Marías is trying to avoid. In any case the note is self-contradictory. Presumably, what Marías intended to say was that the author, like the character of the narrator *in the novel*, spent two years in Oxford. (I assume this is what Marías is referring to in *Negra espalda del tiempo* when he says that the ‘Note’ ‘constituía una irónica contradicción en sí misma y venía a decir por tanto algo distinto de lo que se entendía y se entiende en primera instancia’ [Marías 1998a, 299].)

In addition, the first paragraph of the narrative proper, on the page after the ‘Author’s note’ and after another title page inserted by the British publishers in an

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<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this additional exergue can be read not just literally, as a sincere wish by the author, but, rather, it may be seen as ironic playfulness (‘Believe this if you are naïve enough’, it may be read as saying, for example) or even as part of the narrative itself, especially given the fact that it comes after the page containing dedications – a page which normally immediately precedes a narrative – and not before it, opening up yet another series of readings and prompting the reader to ask a number of questions regarding its relationship to the narrative.

<sup>13</sup> The fellow *novísimos* writers Vicente Molina Foix and Félix de Azúa were Marías’ predecessors in his Oxford post.

attempt to distance the 'Note' from the text proper, is yet another disclaimer, albeit in a slightly different form, which tells us that the narrator speaking in the present tense is not the same as the one who was in Oxford at the time (Marías 1989a, 9, and 1992b, 3). The reader is thus faced with two disclaimers, or a disclaimer squared, multiplying possible readings, infinitely negating and deferring identity: the author with regard to the narrator/protagonist, the narrator/protagonist with regard to his former self during his stay in Oxford or the person he refers to as 'I'.

The question that is worth addressing, because it will shed some light on the issues under discussion, is why such a disclaimer, which undermines authorial intentions, was included in the English version. What was it aimed at protecting in the British market, especially since this, or any kind of disclaimer, has not been deemed necessary for any of the Spanish, French, German, Italian, Greek, or other versions of *Todas las almas*? The answer to this question lies in the perceived relationship between many of the novel's characters and living persons, including the author.

### c) *Narrator and author*

On 16 February 1987 Javier Marías gave a lecture in Bilbao which, judging by the content and the fact that it was read only two months after the publication of *El hombre sentimental*, was written before Marías began writing *Todas las almas*, yet after it was conceived. In the aptly entitled 'Autobiografía y ficción' he affirms his interest in a particular undertaking: tackling the autobiographical as fictional (Marías 1993b). The autobiographical sphere, he affirms, 'me tienta e interesa no en tanto que testimonio, sino en tanto que ficción' (Marías 1993b, 65). Or, as he repeats in the last paragraph: 'Cada vez me tienta e interesa más [...] : abordar el campo autobiográfico, pero sólo como ficción' (Marías 1993b, 69).

*Todas las almas* is the first step towards the realization of this venture.<sup>14</sup> But what exactly does Marías mean by this, and of what does the ‘delicadísima fórmula’ consist? In the same lecture he sums up the three ways in which, in his mind, material which he calls true (‘verídico’) or real (‘verdadero’) or non-invented (‘no inventado’) can be treated (Marías 1993b, 65). The first would be that of the author wanting to write about him- or herself, but also wanting to fictionalize the account in the form of a novel so as to lend it an air of distinction. The second would be that of the writer of memoirs whose aim would be not to fictionalize the account but to establish the veracity of the material (Marías 1993b, 67-68). Marías argues that the reader, naturally suspicious, will suspect that, in the first case, underneath the apparent fictionality of the novel, lie hidden real facts and experiences, a notion which he has later extended to cover the reading of all novels (Marías 1994b, 25), whilst, in the case of the memoirs or the explicit autobiography, the declaration of truthfulness covers a web of lies and deceits, surreptitiously smuggled in (Marías 1993b, 67-68). Philippe Lejeune reaches exactly the same conclusions: ‘Si l’identité n’est pas affirmé (cas de la fiction), le lecteur cherchera à établir des ressemblances, malgré l’auteur; si elle est affirmé (cas de l’autobiographie), il aura tendance à vouloir chercher les différences (erreurs, déformations, etc.)’ (Lejeune 1975, 26).

The third option open to a writer is Marías’ preferred *formula*:

El autor presenta su obra como obra de ficción, o al menos no indica que no lo sea; es decir, en ningún momento se dice o se advierte que se trate de un texto autobiográfico o basado en hechos “verídicos” o “verdaderos” o “no inventados”. Sin embargo, la obra en cuestión tiene todo el *aspecto* de una confesión, y además el narrador recuerda claramente al autor, sobre el cual solemos tener alguna información, sea en el propio libro, sea fuera de él. (Marías 1993b, 68)<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> It is in *Negra espalda* that this project fully unfolds.

<sup>15</sup> Marías cites some novels by the Austrian Thomas Bernhard, the French Marguerite Duras, and his Oxford predecessor Félix de Azúa (*Historia de un idiota contada por él mismo*) as producing the effect of reading he was aiming for in *Todas las almas*.

Marías calls this a ‘balancing act’ which gives rise to a profound ambiguity as the suspicions of the reader oscillate between two readings without, however, opting for one (Marías 1993, 68-69).

Hence, Marías’ aim in *Todas las almas*, as he set about writing it, was to create this ambiguity by way of a double suspicion and inviting, on the one hand, the identification of narrator with author – the suspicion that the narrator’s identity is also that of the author’s – and, on the other, the ‘permanent suspicion’ that the author is exploiting this identification in order surreptitiously to pass off fictional material as real or autobiographical. Of course, one must ask whether this ambiguity is sustainable, whether it is possible for these two mutually exclusive readings to coexist simultaneously, as Marías seems to be suggesting.

With regard to Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which has given rise to quite a number of discussions regarding the question of its fictional and autobiographical status, Gérard Genette, speculating on an identical question, seems to think it is possible:

Chez Proust, il va de soi que chaque exemple peut soulever, à ce niveau, un débat infini entre une lecture de la *Recherche* comme fiction et une lecture de la *Recherche* comme autobiographie. Peut-être d’ailleurs faut-il rester *dans* ce tourniquet. (Genette 1972, 50, n.1)

Whereas Paul de Man, in his essay on autobiography, disagrees with Genette:

But is it possible to remain, as Genette would have it, *within* an undecidable situation? As anyone who has ever been caught in a revolving door or on a revolving wheel can testify, it is certainly most uncomfortable, and all the more so in this case since this whirligig is capable of infinite acceleration and is, in fact, not successive but simultaneous. A system of differentiation based on two elements that, in Wordsworth’s phrase, “of these [are] neither, and [are] both at once” is not likely to be sound. (de Man 1984, 70)

Leaving aside de Man’s questionable analogy with the physical world, one must ask whether it is possible for the reader of *Todas las almas* to remain permanently suspicious and undecided, oscillating between two readings, enveloped by the

ambiguity created by Marías. In any case, it is crucial to our discussion that Marías did not set out to write an autobiographical novel of any kind, which would prevent us from considering it as one in terms of a text written with the intention of telling an autobiographical truth, even if that truth were not verifiable.

Still, there have been many readers who have identified the narrator with the author. Thus, the German literary critic Jens Jessen speaks of the German translation of the novel – *Alle Seelen oder die Irren von Oxford* – as the story of Marías' stay in Oxford.<sup>16</sup> The Spanish critic and writer Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas, in his reviews of *Todas las almas*, reads the novel, in part, as a *roman à clef*, unhesitatingly identifying narrator with author, maintaining the narrator is 'inconfundiblemente el propio Marías' (Masoliver Ródenas 1989a, 47). And so, too, did a number of Spanish university students who, shortly after the publication in 1989, approached Marías, who, at the time, was teaching Translation Theory at the Complutense, to inquire about his son and his marriage (Marías 1998a, 32-35). Needless to say, Marías has never married nor has he had a son. But the narrator of *Todas las almas*, after his return to Madrid from Oxford, marries and becomes a father and the attribution of matrimonial status and fatherhood to Marías himself means the students identified the narrator of the novel with its author.

It is not difficult to ascertain, and not disputed, that the narrator of *Todas las almas* and the author, Javier Marías, have a number of things in common: the narrator's house in Oxford is the one Marías lived in; Marías and the narrator are both smokers, they both drink Coca-Cola, write with fountain pens, love second-hand bookstores, were born on the same day, had similar childhoods, and have no sisters. Some of the narrator's experiences also reflect those of the author (they both

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<sup>16</sup> 'Die Geschichte seines [Marías'] akademischen Aufenthaltes in Oxford ("Alle Seelen oder Die Irren von Oxford") verblüffte allerdings schon durch die Ungeniertheit, mit der er Proust beerbte' (Jessen 1992, 13 – my italics).



made the acquaintance of an attractive woman at Didcot station, for example).<sup>17</sup> In addition, the fact that the narrator remains nameless and that there is no physical description of him means that identification is not excluded on these grounds.

Nevertheless, there is one crucial fact that makes an unqualified and unproblematic identification of the two impossible: firstly, as we mentioned above, unlike Marías, the narrator marries a woman named Luisa and has a child after his return to Madrid and secondly, he works in the world of finance, earning and handling a lot of money (109). In addition, the first few sentences of *Todas las almas* constitute another attempt at separating the narrator from the author:

Pero para hablar de ellos tengo que hablar también de mí, y de mi estancia en la ciudad de Oxford. Aunque el que habla no sea el mismo que estuvo allí. Lo parece, pero no es el mismo. Si a mí mismo me llamo *yo*, o si utilizo un nombre que me ha venido acompañando desde que nací y por el que algunos me recordarán, o si cuento cosas que coinciden con cosas que otros me atribuirían, o si llamo *mi casa* a la casa que antes o después ocuparon otros pero yo habité durante dos años, es sólo porque prefiero hablar en primera persona, y no porque crea que basta con la facultad de la memoria para que alguien siga siendo el mismo en diferentes tiempos y en diferentes espacios. El que aquí cuenta lo que vio y le ocurrió no es aquel que lo vio y al que le ocurrió, ni tampoco es su prolongación, ni su sombra, ni su heredero, ni su usurpador. (10)<sup>18</sup>

When we are informed that the speaker is not the same as the person who was in Oxford, we can interpret it as referring precisely to the questioning of identity

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<sup>17</sup> A lot of the information regarding the real and fictional elements in the novel has been discussed at length by the author himself in *Negra espalda* (1998a), a work in which he explores the interrelatedness of fiction and reality in relation to his own life after the publication of his Oxford novel. There are also a number of essays and articles by Marías which contain considerable amounts of information regarding his life. See, in particular, the following collections of articles and essays: Marías 1991a, 1993a, 1995a, 1996g, 1997a, 1999a.

<sup>18</sup> Marías has explained that, due to the fact that in *Todas las almas* he felt he was embarking on what was for him at the time a novel undertaking, namely consciously constructing a fiction by borrowing elements from reality without, however, writing an autobiographical novel or a *roman à clef*, and because he had decided that the story would be told in the first person by a narrator to whom he would lend his voice, he felt it necessary that the narrator were clearly separated in his own mind from himself, the author (1993c). On the one hand, this paragraph can be read as constituting a questioning of identity of the self through time, in that the narrator deems the faculty of memory an insufficient guarantee of permanent self-sameness (something which Marías himself has maintained on a number of occasions): 'Si a mí mismo me llamo *yo* [...] es sólo porque prefiero hablar en primera persona, y no porque crea que basta con la facultad de la memoria para que alguien siga siendo el mismo en diferentes tiempos y en diferentes espacios' (10).

through time based on memory. On the other hand, however, the final sentence of the first paragraph takes this distinction even further: 'El que aquí cuenta lo que vio y le ocurrió no es aquel que lo vio y al que le ocurrió, ni tampoco es su prolongación, ni su sombra, ni su heredero, ni su usurpador' (10). So not only is he not the same, simply because no one is ever the same with the passage of time, but he is a different person altogether: the person narrating is not and never was the person who actually experienced events. Narrator and empirical subject are two distinct entities. For Marías this was a way for the author to take leave of his narrator, of establishing a separation between narrator and author so as no longer to feel the need to intervene at a later stage (Marías 1993c, 87), although perhaps it would be more precise to say that it is the narrator who is taking leave of the author. Of course, these two paragraphs introduce added complications, since it seems to be the narrator who is establishing a clear separation between his past and present selves.

These opening paragraphs bear an uncanny resemblance to the passage by Jorge Luis Borges entitled 'Borges y yo', where a first person narrator also sets himself apart from the author in the same way: 'Al otro, a Borges, es a quien le ocurren las cosas' (Borges 1970, 383). In the narrators' insistence on a separate identity, both Borges and Marías are also playfully alluding to a certain split between the writing and experiencing selves, a division which is difficult to trace, however. So, Borges' passage ends with the following words: 'No sé cuál de los dos escribe esta página' (1970, 383). Equally, Marías writes of the final sentence of the first paragraph: 'Lo curioso del caso es que esta última frase citada se hizo y es verdad, creo yo, justamente porque no es posible saber quién la escribió o escribe, el Narrador o el autor, o, si se prefiere, porque la escribieron y escriben los dos' (1993c, 87). This someone, who could be both at the moment of writing, can also equally be no one: 'Si es que alguien soy [...] Así mi vida es una fuga y todo lo pierdo y todo es

del olvido, o del otro', says Borges' narrator (1970, 383); 'lo que había logrado era, a mi juicio, que el Narrador no fuera Nadie, y por tanto que pudiera también ser Cualquiera', says Marías of his narrator (1993c, 88). Nevertheless, through this narrative disclaimer of sorts, not too dissimilar to the extratextual – exergual – disclaimer later inserted in the English edition, the narrator of *Todas las almas* was thus, in Marías' mind, imbued from the very beginning with an absolute autonomy which allowed the author to lend him a number of his own attributes which I have already enumerated.

This separation of narrator and author is necessary for the latter to write. It is the point of view required for the narration. However, the freedom allowed by this separation means that Marías can lend his narrator some of his own characteristics, converting his narrator into an alter or latent ego or 'quien yo pude ser pero no fui', as Marías puts it, thus, in a sense, fictionalizing himself in the same way that some of the other characters are the result of the imaginative fictionalization of existing persons, as we shall see.

This, in turn, means the narrator and author can be seen as one and the same person, as indeed they have been. To avoid this identification, Marías takes recourse to attributing to his narrator matrimonial status and fatherhood. This attribution gives him even more freedom to accentuate the similarities between narrator and author, thus perpetuating the ambiguity aimed at. This device is, therefore, insufficient to avoid identification of narrator with author in the eyes of many readers, as I have shown. Nevertheless, however much the similarities between narrator and author invite their identification, the initial disclaimer in the first paragraph of the narrative, coupled with the discrepancies, render the total identification of narrator with author impossible, strictly speaking. Therefore an identification of the two as that

established by Masoliver Ródenas, Jessen, and the students, constitutes a misreading, not least because it simplifies their intricate relationship.

d) *The reality of fiction*

The inclusion of the explicit disclaimer is very much linked to the reactions to which the novel gave rise in the UK and in Oxford in particular, that is to say to the way it was read and interpreted by certain people and to the effects produced by those readings. The publication of *All souls* in the UK was delayed and, in *Negra espalda*, Javier Marías details that, essentially, the delay was due to the publishers, Harvill, initially considering the novel a *roman à clef* and seeking legal authorization by its lawyers before embarking on its publication so as to avoid future lawsuits. The editor, Christopher MacLehose, responded to Marías' enquiry regarding the delay by explaining that the publishers were trying to ascertain that the book, being a *roman à clef*, contained no 'intentional or involuntary offense' (Marías 1998a, 293). In a letter dated 23 February 1990 Marías wrote back defending the fictionality of his narrative along the lines we have outlined, again making reference to what he has elsewhere called the 'suspicious' reader, to explain why certain readers may see people depicted in the novel as characters as real (Marías 1998a, 293-294).

What Marías does not mention in his letter to MacLehose, nor indeed in *Negra espalda* as a whole, since both maintain the fictitiousness of the narrative, is that, when he set about writing *Todas las almas*, one of his aims was, as we have seen and as he has explained elsewhere, to invite, or at least not to exclude, a reading of the novel as autobiographical, as well as other readings. And it is in part because he toys with the reader in this way that some have been inclined to see in *Todas las almas* a *roman à clef* or an autobiographical novel.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, it appears that it was part of the academic world of Oxford in particular, that read *Todas las almas* in these ways, although, according to Marías' account of events in *Negra espalda*, the Head of the Sub-Faculty, Professor I. D. L. Michael, had maintained on more than one occasion that the narrative was not a *roman à clef*, not least in his letter to Harvill underlining the fictitiousness of the novel so as to facilitate its publication, and Eric Southworth, another member of that Sub-Faculty, also considered it a novel (Marías 1998a, 76, 80, 295). However, according to Marías, Professor Michael did fear legal action from certain quarters. Upon the latter's suggestion, the Spaniard, therefore, included the disclaimer and also modified the name of one of the novel's characters, in whom, it appears, a member of the Sub-Faculty saw himself unfavourably portrayed.<sup>19</sup>

Still, this is not the only character in *Todas las almas* in whom certain readers have seen a likeness to, or even a portrait or caricature of, a real person. During one of his nocturnal wanderings through Oxford in *Todas las almas*, the narrator encounters a famous Spanish academic (141). The adroit, distinguished, and self-satisfied Spanish Cervantes expert is an anecdotal character who appears only briefly in this scene and who is modelled on Francisco Rico, now a member of the *Real Academia de la Lengua* and professor of Medieval Hispanic Literature at the Universidad Autónoma (Bellaterra), who does indeed elegantly sport a balding head and has also only recently published what is intended to be the definitive edition of *Don Quijote*. In *Negra espalda* Marías maintains that the *profesor del Diestro* is only

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<sup>19</sup> This character only appears once very briefly in *Todas las almas* (151). In *All souls* this character's name has been changed to the more sardonic *Leigh-Justice*, echoing names of characters in Westerns or cartoon strips or a mixture of the two, a cross between Lee Marvin and Judge Dredd. In fact, the name alludes to the English supporting actor James Robertson Justice (Marías 1998a, 299). The narrator's dislike of Leigh-Peele/Leigh-Justice mirrors Marías' dislike of the real person, to whom the character allegedly refers, manifest in *Negra espalda* (Marías 1998a, 49). For that reason alone, and because Marías does not explicitly dispute the likeness, it is possible that the seven lines dedicated to Leigh-Peele/Justice constitute a not so thinly-veiled caricature of a real person, but only for those who are, of course, familiar with the latter.

partially inspired by Rico, although he does admit that the professor was the model for this (Marías 1998a, 57-74).

Apart from Francisco Rico, it may be surmised by some readers that the entire Oxford Sub-Faculty of Spanish in *Todas las almas* is modelled on the real one: Aidan Kavanagh is said to bear a strong resemblance to the real Head of the Spanish Sub-Faculty, I. D. L. Michael, Cromer-Blake to both the late Philip Lloyd-Bostock and Eric Southworth, and Toby Rylands to an older and retired professor. Alec Dewar can also be perceived to be a caricature of an existing Hispanist. In *Negra espalda* Javier Marías reiterates that none of these characters in *Todas las almas* was modelled on existing ones (Marías 1998a, 28).

Nevertheless, even if some of the novel's characters are not actually modelled on real people, there are similarities between some of them and existing persons. Thus, the novel's character 'Lord Rymer', the wine-loving college Warden, 'miembro de la cámara de los lores y notable intrigante de las ciudades de Londres, Oxford, Bruselas, Estrasburgo y Ginebra'(53), was partly inspired by an existing lord whom Marías had met (1998a, 97). His fictional life is prolonged, distancing him thus from the existing lord who had provided part of the initial inspiration: in 'Fantasmas leídos' and 'No más amores', the first a semi-fictional article on ghosts and the second a short story proper, he reappears as someone who had documented the life of ghosts (Marías 1993a, 23-28, and 1996a, 233-241).

More than one person has likened Aidan Kavanagh, the Head of the Sub-Faculty of Spanish in the novel, to the real one, not least the latter himself (see Marías 1998a, 297), partly perhaps because of the fact that, like him, Kavanagh occupies the post of head of department and writes novels under pseudonyms.

In the character Cromer-Blake many saw the now deceased Philip-Lloyd Bostock, and not solely because of the double-barrelled name. Lloyd-Bostock died of



AIDS at the age of 40 in 1986, not too long after Marías' departure from Oxford, and Cromer-Blake also dies in the novel of an unspecified illness shortly after the narrator's return to Madrid.<sup>20</sup> In *Negra espalda*, Marías further maintains that many also identified Cromer-Blake with Eric Southworth (for example, the character, like the latter, has a research interest in Valle-Inclán), 'de manera que aquí se llegó al absurdo de identificar a dos con uno' (Marías 1998a, 51).

With regard to the identification of the character Toby Rylands with the retired professor whom Marías also calls Rylands in *Negra espalda* – imitating Ian Michael who insisted, in his exchanges with the author, on calling his colleagues by the names of characters in the novel, thus identifying them with the latter – Marías is more understanding ('Sin embargo la identificación entre ambos Rylands resultó hasta cierto punto comprensible, porque para describir al personaje tomé y adorné y recompuse algunos rasgos físicos de la persona, y eso indujo a confusión sin duda a los superficiales' [Marías 1998a, 40-41]). The real retired professor is identical to the Rylands as described on pages 152-154 of the novel, 'aunque no tenía los labios carnosos ni los ojos de dos colores', as Marías points out (Marías 1998a, 42).

However, despite the above similarities between certain living persons and a number of characters in the novel, there are also a number of dissimilarities that make identification between them problematic. Thus, in a conversation with Ian Michael reproduced in *Negra espalda*, Marías tries to convince him that Rylands is not the real retired professor: "Pero el personaje no es él, aunque le haya prestado algunos de sus rasgos físicos", protesté; "no hay en la novela una palabra dicha por Toby Rylands que le haya oído jamás decir a Toby, y yo no sé ni sabía nada de tales

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<sup>20</sup> Like Lloyd-Bostock during Marías' stay in Oxford, Cromer-Blake is under the effects of that disease during the narrator's spell in Oxford and is forced into prolonged absences from the University due to illness and hospitalization. In addition, Cromer-Blake's diction is identical to Lloyd-Bostock's: in *Todas las almas* the narrator speaks of Cromer-Blake, 'con su inimitable dicción inglesa que según los admirativos alumnos suena como la BBC "de antes"', and in an article in which Marías pays homage to 'Philip L-B' he affirms the latter spoke 'un inglés tan distinguido que según los alumnos "sonaba como el de la BBC de antes"' (Marías 1997a, 198-201).

actividades” (Marías 1998a, 84). Many of the utterances and thoughts of Toby Rylands, explains Marías, could have been attributed to Vicente Aleixandre and others were simply invented (Marías 1998a, 88). The ‘actividades’ refers to espionage in which Rylands hints at having been involved in the novel, without Marías, as he alleges, being aware at the time of writing of the fact that the real retired professor had also indulged in espionage in the past (Marías 1998a, 39). So, as Marías playfully alludes to the now stereotypical and romantic idea of the Oxford scholar-cum-spy – Alec Dewar also performs occasional tasks for the British Secret Service – he finds some of his fiction confirmed by reality.

Cromer-Blake, too, is not simply merely a thinly-veiled copy of an original, partly evidenced by the fact that the character was identified with two different people. Furthermore, in *Todas las almas* the narrator says of a photograph of John Gawsworth that it reminds him of Cromer-Blake; in *Negra espalda* Marías qualifies the remark made by his narrator regarding Gawsworth:

Ahora que soy yo quien habla y no el narrador, puedo decir que a quien me recuerda un poco es a Juan Benet y otro poco a Eduardo Mendoza, por no salirnos de escritores [...] A quienes no me recuerda en absoluto es a Eric Southworth ni a Philip Lloyd-Bostock, los supuestos modelos reales, vivo y muerto, de Cromer-Blake. (Marías 1989a, 163-164)

The narrator has stated that he sees a similarity between Cromer-Blake and Gawsworth, thus associating the two. The author explains that Gawsworth does not remind him in the least of either of the two supposed models of Cromer-Blake.

Still, the certainty that leads Masoliver Ródenas to the identification between narrator and author also leads him to the erroneous recognition of the character Lord Rymer as having been modelled on Professor Emeritus Raymond Carr, warden of St Anthony’s College during Marías’ stay in Oxford.<sup>21</sup> Marías denies this, because he saw and portrayed Lord Rymer – like the existing lord who provided the initial

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<sup>21</sup> ‘La cena o “high table” presidida por Raymond, perdón Lord Rymer’ (Masoliver Ródenas 1989a, 47).

inspiration for the character – as stout and staggering, unlike Raymond Carr (Marías 1998a, 97). Consequently, Lord Rymer is not as ‘fácilmente identificable’ as Masoliver Ródenas would have it (Masoliver Ródenas 1990, 22).

Despite protestations to the contrary, it seems Professor Michael also read *Todas las almas* in a similar vein, and although he may have been perspicacious in his detection of certain parallels between characters in the novel and existing persons, this reading leads him mistakenly to identify one of the entirely fictitious characters of the novel, the narrator’s lover, Clare Bayes, with an existing person.<sup>22</sup>

These instances of misreading are in part due to the readers’ lack of uncertainty regarding their readings. Certainty leads them to make mistaken identifications because it also excludes the element of uncertainty built into the narrative, thus making any certain identification too simplifying a reading. With the exception of John Gawsworth, there is no character in *Todas las almas* who can simply and wholly be identified with an existing person, as we have seen.<sup>23</sup>

In a review of *Todas las almas* in the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, we have an instance of yet another misreading. Heinrich Detering identifies the only character in the novel who is entirely and exclusively identifiable with a real person, the writer John Gawsworth, as a fictional one (Detering 1997, 34). This is an instance of an inverted misreading. Detering sees a fictional character in an entirely real person. His misreading is surrounded by an explicit admission of uncertainty in that the attribution of fictional status to Gawsworth is tempered by a question mark. This question mark allows for the element of uncertainty to shed doubt on the character’s attributed fictional status and it is, therefore, still a misreading, but a

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Si había un personaje totalmente inventado en *Todas las almas*’, says Marías, ‘(esto es, que no pudiera identificarse con nadie real ni siquiera con mala fe o malas artes), era el principal femenino, Clare Bayes’ (Marías 1998a, 81).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Guillermo’ (Cabrera Infante) and ‘Miriam’ (Gómez), ‘un matrimonio amigo que vivía en South Kensington’ can also be identified with their existing namesakes, although they can hardly be called characters since they are only mentioned once, parenthetically (22).

misreading more representative of the character's status and the narrative as a whole because of its recognition of a certain ambiguity contained in the narrative itself, something not appreciated by a number of other readers.

All the above misreadings have something in common: they eliminate the degree of discrepancy between the empirical (or existing) and the fictional world in characters whose configuration may be partly dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on existing persons. It is a misreading in its collapsing of the difference between the two worlds. To identify entirely fictional characters who are not in any way related to existing persons with real people is to perpetuate this process of misreading (as is the reverse process). Structurally, all these readings obey the same principles as a reading of *Todas las almas* as autobiographical or as a *roman à clef*.

The ambiguity is in great part a result of the fact that many of the narrative's characters whom we have discussed above, including the narrator, have been given shape through a mixture of real and fictional elements. It is the way in which all the elements are combined that is important to the configuration and narrative conviction or credibility of the characters, not so much what the origin of the individual elements is. The narrative owes its existence to this spectrum of equivalent real and fictional elements. However, it is the co-existence of real and fictional elements, their indistinct association and the cohabitation of fictional and non-fictional characters which invites the above misreadings.

Consequently, Cromer-Blake, Lord Rymer, Aidan Kavanagh, Toby Rylands, Alec Dewar, and even Leigh-Peele/Justice and del Diestro, do enjoy a certain degree of autonomy as characters in a novel, even if some of their attributes have been borrowed from real people. None of them can be entirely reduced to or unproblematically equated with an existing person, precisely because they are characters who form part of, arise through, and give rise to a narrative. They are to a

great extent imaginatively (re-)created through the narrative and that is what gives them a certain degree of autonomy. They are meaningful in that they exist in relation to other characters and the storyline; they become meaningful characters, they acquire meaning, not because of the details borrowed from existing persons, but because of the way these details, as well as all the other fictional details attributed to them are associated, because of the way this material has been treated, the use to which it has been put. As John Pilling once wrote of Henry James' autobiographical text, *A small boy and others*: 'It is not so much the minutiae of one particular life that are important as the *manner* in which these minutiae are combined together by the imagination to create configurations full of meaning' (Pilling 1981, 24 – my italics). 'Seleccionamos ciertos rasgos de una persona real para convertirla en una figura de novela', Antonio Muñoz Molina has written of the process of imaginative fictionalization involving actual persons, 'añadiéndole datos y circunstancias inventadas que no se superponen a su biografía verdadera para esconderla, sino que la convierten en otra vida *de una cualidad y de un orden diferente*' (Muñoz Molina 1993, 39 – my italics).<sup>24</sup>

In essence, all the above is related to the ontological status of the novel. As we shall observe in the second part of this chapter, fictionalization through imaginative and stylistic association creates life of an order and quality distinct from the empirical world. In the previous chapter we saw that, as a product of the imagination, the novel creates another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it. It is the way in which all the elements, real or fictional, are imaginatively combined that is important to the configuration of the characters, not so much what the origin of certain elements is. The novel has to be viewed as a system of closely-

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<sup>24</sup> Muñoz Molina has made the same point elsewhere with regard to the elements of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* which have their origins in existing or empirical reality, and which 'al combinarse de cierto modo entre sí dan como resultado una narración absolutamente imaginaria' (1998, 186).

knit *internal* relationships and should therefore be read independently of empirical reality – the novel has its own ontology.

## II.

### a) *Germination*

The narrator of *Todas las almas* likens the association of ideas making up his narration to a temporary state of mental disturbance (198), echoing Marías' comparison of the exacerbated associative capacity of the writer with madness (1993e, 261). It is temporary because, after his return to Madrid, he 'recovers' from it: 'Mi vida discurre ahora por otros cauces, ya no soy el mismo que estuvo dos años en la ciudad de Oxford, creo. Ya no estoy perturbado' (239). Nevertheless, the narration of his stay in Oxford is the product of this temporary disturbance – because, after his return to Madrid, he recovers from it – in that it is the disturbance which is responsible for all the associations and it is also the story of this disturbance, as the narrator himself maintains: 'Fue aquella noche cuando me di cuenta de que mi estancia en la ciudad de Oxford sería seguramente, cuando terminara, la historia de una perturbación' (69).<sup>25</sup>

Thus, as in the previous novel, the creative process is enacted in the narrative. Narrator and author of *Todas las almas* see their storytelling afflicted and, of course, blessed, by the same associative disturbance. (The only difference between the narrator's and the author's mental disturbance is that the former's is temporary since, upon his return to Madrid, he returns to the world of the living and enters the world of finance, thus dissociating himself from the world of letters, while the latter's is permanent or, at least, recurrent, given that his profession is writing.) The mental

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<sup>25</sup> This is also the reason why a German review is entitled 'Report from the wheels of madness' (Auffermann 1997, iv).



disturbance is responsible for the storytelling and constitutes it, just as the dream and the dream-like state account for the narrative in the previous novel.

This implies that narrator and author tell a story in the same way, which in turn means that their narrative voice is the same.<sup>26</sup> Lending the narrator his voice is very much tied up with the origins of this novel, the process of creative germination, which, as he indicates, are to be found in non-fictional texts written during his stay in Oxford, but also afterwards, and it is in those texts that further evidence of the fact that the narrator's voice is the author's can be found. The choice of the first person narrative, as was the case in *El hombre sentimental*, again affords Marías the necessary imaginative and stylistic freedom to invent.<sup>27</sup>

We have seen how Marías relies on biographical elements for the development of some of the characters, including the narrator. Similarly, some non-fictional texts provide the initial inspiration for the writing of the fiction and give an indication of the process of germination of the novel and its voice. So, in an article on Oxford entitled 'Por fin nos envidian' and published in 1985 after Marías' return to Madrid, not only do we come across a number of elements that will later find their way into the novel – there is repeated mention of Oxford as a 'lugar conservado en almíbar', its myriad bells, high table, the 'genius' who bores people with the subject of his or her doctoral thesis, the subject of that thesis, which is an eighteenth-century tax imposed on cider, the sordid discothèque and the plump local girls wearing miniskirts – but, more importantly, the tone of the piece, which is somewhat sarcastic

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<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Marías himself has made explicit that the narrator's voice in *Todas las almas* is his own. In 'Quién escribe' he writes that the narrator's voice is not a fictional creation: 'Decidí no crear una voz ficticia para su narración, una voz impostada [...] Aquí no rehúí mi propia voz, esto es mi dicción habitual o natural por escrito, la de – por ejemplo – las cartas que había escrito a mis amigos cuando estaba en Inglaterra' (Marías 1993c, 85-86).

<sup>27</sup> And the fact that the narrator's voice is the same as the author's is, in my view, the only substantial autobiographical element in *Todas las almas*, if voice can be considered an autobiographical element, that is.

and critical with regard to Oxford, is not dissimilar to the tone adopted in *Todas las almas* (Marías 1995b).

If the idea of the novel and the voice were conceived in Marías' letters written from Oxford, then this article is an example of the period of gestation of novel and voice; this is also why, in 1995, Marías himself wrote in the margins of this article: 'Ya empezaba a condensarse aquí mi novela *Todas las almas*' (Marías 1995b, 313).

But the most significant example of a non-fictional text prefiguring his fiction is an article entitled 'El hombre que pudo ser rey', first published in *El País* on 23 May 1985 and therefore written during the period of Marías' stay in Oxford (Marías 1991b). This article is about Marías' discovery of John Gawsorth and it is reproduced word for word and almost in its entirety in *Todas las almas* in the pages making up the introduction to Gawsorth (121-133). The only difference between the article and the section in the novel is that the latter is longer and contains more information and speculation on Gawsorth, primarily because Marías' interest in him had been growing during the time that had elapsed between the writing of the two texts, and he had been able to uncover more information. Needless to say, the voice of the two texts is identical. The article ends with the following conclusion (not included in *Todas las almas*):

Lo que quiero apuntar es que, por mucho que sepamos de la vida de los hombres y mujeres ilustres, la zona de sombra será siempre mucho mayor que la que pueda iluminarse, y lo que se pierde a cambio de esa pobre parcial, impotente iluminación puede ser, en algunos casos (como el de Gawsorth, tal vez), demasiado desde un punto de vista literario [...] Curiosamente, quizá sea desde el punto de vista narrativo desde el único que aún pueda convenir a veces no saber demasiado o incluso ocultar. Pero al menos en lo que respecta a Gawsorth (y a no ser que me decida a escribir al individuo de Tennessee), no parece probable que su historia corra peligro ni que el lector de estas líneas vaya a saber más de lo que aquí acabo de relatar. Posiblemente porque su obra no sea, en efecto, de las que aún nos importan. Y tal vez ello sea para su suerte, pues una de las cosas que la crítica actual parece ignorar es el

incorregible y secular deseo de los escritores de llegar a convertirse un día en personajes de ficción y de ser tratados como tales (Marías 1991b, 198-199).

This statement uncannily foreshadows *Todas las almas*. Little did he know that he would contact the person in Tennessee who would provide him with more information on Gawsworth, including an article by Durrell, and he would also give the opportunity to readers to find out more about Gawsworth in a narrative which would treat Gawsworth in the manner that all writers of fiction desire to be treated (including Marías himself).<sup>28</sup>

These texts bear witness to the process of germination of *Todas las almas* and its voice. But what is also interesting about the latter text in particular, is its inclusion, word for word, in the novel. The reception of this double text, its reading and the way it is interpreted is not the same, however, and therefore paradoxically it is not the same text. In the article, the existence of Gawsworth is not doubted, whereas as a passage in a novel, containing an even greater number of details and references to existing writers than the first text, Gawsworth can be seen as a fictional character, confirming the importance of a text's illocutionary force.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, there is another fictionalization of Gawsworth in the short story entitled 'Un epigrama de lealtad', written and first published in the year of the publication of *Todas las almas*, which recounts an incident involving a beggar in London excitedly drawing his companions' attention to the shop window of Bertram Rota, a second-hand bookshop in Covent Garden, and to a publication of three poems by Dylan Thomas in which an epigram bears witness to the author's loyalty to John Gawsworth (Marías 1993g, 153-163). The short story is preceded by a 'warning': 'Aviso: Aunque este episodio de la vida del escritor John Gawsworth es un texto nuevo e independiente, cabe advertir que sólo los lectores de mi novela *Todas las almas* (1989a) dispondrán de todos los datos para su comprensión cabal. J.M.'

<sup>29</sup> The passage in the novel can be likened to Borges' short story 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*' where the character Pierre Menard has an effect similar to Gawsworth's: he, too, is enmeshed in a detailed web of fictional and non-fictional, literary-historical references. Furthermore, Marías' word for word reproduction of the passage mirrors Menard's attempt to write *El Quijote* (Borges 1989b). The difference between Menard and Marías is that the latter reproduces one of his own texts whereas the former attempts a coincidence with someone else's. In any case, Marías himself has drawn a parallel with Borges' story with regard to the similarity of one of the former's short stories to a scene in *Corazón tan blanco*, the novel following *Todas las almas*: 'Es una muestra de cómo las mismas páginas pueden no ser las mismas, según enseñó Borges mejor que nadie en su pieza 'Pierre Menard, autor de *El Quijote*' (Marías 1996a, 11). Essentially, what determines the different receptions of one and the same text is its illocutionary force. This explains, for example, the lack of doubt regarding the existence of Gawsworth in the article and the uncertainty surrounding him in the novel; despite the fact that the text is essentially identical, the marks surrounding the article ask for a different reading than those surrounding the novel, thus providing further proof to support the crucial importance of the exergue.

I believe Marías' entire œuvre is proof of the importance of the exergue's illocutionary force in that fictional and non-fictional material permeates all of his writing irrespective of its form or genre, and the way it is received depends not so much on the content of the text in question, but on the markers surrounding it. More significantly, perhaps, all of Marías' texts, whether they be newspaper articles, essays, conference papers, prefaces, biographical (and photographic) sketches, autobiographical texts, short stories, novels, or even translations, continuously feed on and inform each other and are interrelated, so that, for example, a novel like *Todas las almas* germinates in non-fictional texts which precede it but also, in turn, continues to engender, for instance, articles on Gawsorth and second-hand books and booksellers like 'Polvoriento espectáculo' and 'El mal imaginativo' (Marías 1991d and 1993g). To be precise, however, it is not so much the writing which engenders more writing. Rather, in this case writing is an instance of the work of a writer which finds expression in various forms and genres, not a project, but what Blanchot refers to as *l'œuvre*, so that it is this work of literature which in a sense places demands upon Marías and what he finishes is an individual text, a book or an article, never the work. The work itself is never finished; it is interminable and that is what propels writers in general to keep on writing (Blanchot 1955). To complete a text is merely the confidence – and let us not forget that confidence is a source of error, as Cioran said (Cioran 1991, 196) – by which a momentary limit is placed upon what is in essence interminable. Thus, all of Marías' writings are the product of one work and are interrelated because they are an instance of it, rather than isolated and unrelated texts.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This is certainly a strong argument for tracing Javier Marías' development as a writer in all of his writings, irrespective of their genre, although I think that ultimately his development is determined by, and most accurately reflected in, his novelistic evolution, and that is why, as I stated in the Introduction, Marías is, first and foremost and despite all of the above, a novelist.

b) *On the process of imaginative association*

Towards the end of *Todas las almas* there is a reference to Vladimir Nabokov (and Lermontov), which is digressively brought about through a process of association as the narrator finds himself eavesdropping on Cromer-Blake and, at the same time, reflecting on the English word used to describe his action:

En inglés existe un verbo que en español sólo se puede traducir explicándolo, y *to eavesdrop* (este es el verbo) significa (esta es la explicación) escuchar indiscretamente, secretamente, furtivamente, con una escucha deliberada y no casual ni indeseada (para esto, en cambio, se usa *to overhear*), y la palabra se compone a su vez de dos, la palabra *eaves*, que significa *alero*, y la palabra *drop*, que puede significar varias cosas pero tiene que ver sobre todo con *gotas* y *goteo* (el que escucha se pone a cierta distancia, mínima, de la casa: se pone allí donde el alero gotea después de la lluvia, y desde allí escucha lo que se dice dentro). Sobre el recurso de *Eavesdropping* en la novela del XIX, y más concretamente en *Un héroe de nuestro tiempo*, reflexionó una vez Vladimir Vladimirovich de las colonias, y aunque Nabokov no estuvo en Oxford, sino en Cambridge como estudiante, no me cabe duda de que allí tendría, en los años veinte, la oportunidad de descubrir lo mismo que yo en mi tiempo en Oxford, a saber: que *eavesdropping* no sólo era y es una práctica vigente en ambas ciudades, sino el mejor medio siempre (aunque primitivo) de obtener la información precisa para no ser un marginado de los que no poseen ni transmiten ninguna. En Oxford (y en Cambridge, supongo) *eavesdropping*, como dijo Nabokov que sucedía en la novela de Lermontov mencionada, se convierte en la apenas perceptible rutina del destino. (200-201)

It is the self-conscious, self-reflective process of thinking about his action while performing it – Robert Spires calls it *textualization* (Spires 1996, 232) – which leads to the association of *eavesdropping*, its definition, etymology, translation, Oxford, Cambridge, Nabokov, Lermontov and the narrator. To a great extent, *Todas las almas* is essentially composed of such associations.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Another example of this process of *textualization* can be observed in the scene in which the narrator is having oral sex with Muriel, whilst reflecting on the words used to think about what he is doing: “‘Tengo la polla dentro de su boca’, pensé al tenerla, y lo pensé con estas palabras, pues sólo esas palabras vienen cuando se pone en palabras o en pensamientos lo que se está haciendo con lo que denominan (cuando lo que denominan está actuando), más aún si no se conoce apenas el otro cuerpo y sobre todo si las palabras hacen referencia a las partes del cuerpo propio y no a las del otro, con las que siempre se es más respetuoso y para las que sí se buscan y emplean los eufemismos y las metáforas y los términos neutros’ (145-146). Robert Spires convincingly argues that this example of textualizing underscores how language tends to obliterate instinct and feeling. In this case, an instinctive act is transformed ‘by discourse into a vulgar and trivial text. Language has displaced



The allusion to Nabokov is only one of the numerous references to Hispanic, French, Russian, and British writers in the novel.<sup>32</sup> And there are at least two thinly-veiled references to Nikolai Gogol and his novel *Dead souls* (apart from an explicit reference on page 36): on page 171 the narrator calls Toby Ryland's mysterious past self (referring to his past life involved in espionage activities when he saw the person he loved commit suicide) an 'alma muerta', and on page 181 we are told that Alec Dewar, too, 'era un alma muerta'. These references, like the title of the narrative itself, apart from obviously referring to the homonymous Oxford College, are significant in that they also allude to Gogol's narrative. This Marías also makes quite explicit in an interview where he explains that his narrative was meant to be a homage to Gogol whom he greatly admires (Marías 1989ae, 40). But it is also evidenced in the way his narrator eagerly collects dead souls for his narrative, playfully analogous to Gogol's Chichikov, who combs Russia's countryside collecting deceased *muzhiks* (serfs) (Gogol 1996).<sup>33</sup> Both narratives are very digressive in form; in both, seemingly secondary or marginal characters become significant in the storytelling process, and the materials of both are 'absent presences, and presences made absent', as Richard Pevear writes in the introduction to Gogol's work (Gogol 1996, xviii).

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experience [...] His only escape from the vulgarity and nonreality of a text is to stop textualizing, which can only occur if he stops the thinking process itself' (Spires 1996, 232). And Alfonso de Toro maintains that Muriel's body is transformed into language (de Toro 1995, 83). Whatever the case may be, this process of *textualizing* is an instance of the process of associations of which the novel consists and, as we shall see, is related to the slight mental disturbance affecting the narrator during his stay in Oxford.

<sup>32</sup> For example: Borges (100), Calderón (80), Cervantes (80, 141), García Lorca (81), Góngora (80), Valle-Inclán (199), Zorrilla (172), Montaigne (80), Baudelaire (89), Lermontov, Gogol, Pushkin, Nabokov (35, 36, 173, 200, 201), Eliot, Lawrence, Auden, Ellis, Shiel, Thomas, Miller, Durrell (121-127), Vernon Lee, Sterne (93, 160), Machen (90-91, 100-105, 121, 124).

<sup>33</sup> Both narratives bear witness to the particular conception of narrative voice and point of view expressed by the author of *Dead souls* as follows: 'For contemporary judgment does not recognize that equally wondrous are the glasses that observe the sun and those that look at the movements of inconspicuous insects; for contemporary judgment does not recognize that much depth of soul is needed to light up the picture drawn from contemptible life and elevate it into a pearl of creation' (Gogol 1996, 134).



On the one hand, Chichikov's process of collection of souls is analogous to that of the narrator in *Todas las almas*. On the other hand, it also serves as a metaphor for the way in which – like elements of many of the novel's characters – material, which partly has its origins in Marías' biography, is imaginatively woven into the narrative.

All the writers mentioned in the narrative are dear to Javier Marías himself. They are writers he has translated into Spanish, or writers he is interested in, and he has written about many of them (see in particular Marías 1992c and 1993a). His way of writing about these and other writers, as exemplified in the collection of texts on foreign writers entitled *Vidas escritas*, is narrative in form, that is to say, the writers and aspects of their lives are submitted to a process of fictionalization, storytelling, and *textualization*. Their lives become a story and the writers are treated more as characters in a narrative rather than people that existed. As Marías explains in the preface to the collection,

la idea era, en suma, tratar a esos literatos conocidos de todos como a personajes de ficción, que probablemente es la manera, por otro lado, en que todos los escritores desean íntimamente verse tratados, con independencia de su celebridad u olvido. (Marías 1992c, 11)

(As I mentioned earlier, the desire to see himself treated as a character in a fiction is something that also applies to Javier Marías himself. Let us not forget that *Todas las almas* is already a move in this direction, in that the narrator was conceived to be a *potential* Marías, someone Marías himself could be or could have been, and *Negra espalda* is to my mind, an attempt, although only in part, to do what he did with other writers in *Vidas escritas*, namely to treat himself as a character in a story.)

In a sense, in Marías' hands these writers are treated as fictional characters: they are fictionalized and *textualized*. *Todas las almas* signals very much the beginning of this process of fictionalization of existing writers, or writers that existed, which has become one of Marías' trademarks ever since. Before the

collection of texts published in *Vidas escritas*, in *Cuentos únicos*, a collection of little known short stories by lesser known British short-story writers published in 1989, Marías, apart from choosing the stories and translating some of them, also wrote biographical notes on all the writers which read like very short stories themselves. In *Miramientos*, a collection of short pieces written on the basis of photographs of deceased or existing Hispanic writers, this process of fictionalization is continued.

In *Todas las almas*, the implicit reference to the sixteenth-century English poet and dramatist Christopher Marlowe is another, more subtle, indication of this process: ‘Y fue entonces cuando no pude evitar recordar unos versos leídos como una cita, los versos de otro autor inglés del que (al revés de Gawsworth) se sabe mucho, menos de su muerte oscura, que fue violenta y es legendaria y ha habido que imaginarla, como la de Clare Newton [...]Y pensé: “*Thou hast committed fornication: but that was in another country, and besides, the wench is dead.*”’(231).<sup>34</sup>

The narrator associates the death of Clare Bayes’ mother with the death of the *wench* of Marlowe’s quotation (Clare’s mother had an adulterous relationship with a Briton in India where she then committed suicide), but also with Marlowe’s own death (he was stabbed to death in a tavern brawl). Marlowe is also associated with John Gawsworth, not because one was famous and the other was not, but because the lover of Clare Bayes’ mother was someone called Terry Armstrong, Gawsworth’s real name. This introduces the possibility that Gawsworth, who was in India at the time, was the lover in question, making him an addressee of Marlowe’s line, just like the Spanish narrator himself. He, in turn, also committed fornication in another country with, potentially, the daughter of Gawsworth’s Indian love, although his

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<sup>34</sup> The quotation is from the play *The Jew of Malta*, Act IV, Scene I, when Friar Barnardine tells Barabas ‘Thou hast committed –’, and Barabas replies: ‘Fornication: but that was in another country, And besides the wench is dead’ (Marlowe 1969, 399-400).

wench did not die. And it is precisely the inclusion of John Gawsworth in *Todas las almas*, one of Mariás' absent presences or dead souls, that marks the beginning of this somewhat Borgesian enterprise.

John Gawsworth was a writer, but unlike all the other writers mentioned in *Todas las almas*, he also becomes a character. And he becomes a character because his presence is imaginatively woven into the narrative and he is thus infused with (narrative) life, because he is creatively linked to other characters and elements, including the narrator. The latter first learns of Gawsworth through his interest in Machen and from the person who asks him to subscribe to the Machen society. He also finds out that Machen had written a preface to one of his books.

Gawsworth, whose real name was Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong (1912-1970), was and remains scarcely known and it is this relative obscurity, coupled with his peculiar persona, which gradually attract the narrator's interest (121-122). This process of imaginative fictionalization of a real person is the clearest and most conclusive evidence of the separate ontology of the novel, because he is the only character in the novel who did, in fact, exist in the empirical world, yet he becomes significant in narrative terms, acquiring a narrative value entirely independent of his worldly existence: what becomes relevant for a reading of the novel is, as we shall now see, not the origin of the character, but the treatment to which he is submitted, the narrative use to which he is subjected, the way he is inserted into the narrative, and the concomitant narrative effects he has.

Thirteen pages of the narrative, forming a parenthesis or narrative stasis, are dedicated to introducing us to John Gawsworth and his life, and we are told, among other things, of his friendships and acquaintances in the literary world (for example, T. E. Lawrence, Yeats, and Hardy), of his military service in the RAF during the Second World War, of his stay in countries like Italy, Algeria, Egypt, and India, of

his inheritance from the writer and friend M. P. Shiel of the Kingdom of Redonda (a small island in the Caribbean Sea, part of the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles), and of his end as a beggar sleeping on park benches before dying at the age of 58. Also included in these pages are two photographs, one of Gawsworth in his military uniform and one of his mortuary mask (129, 131).<sup>35</sup>

The narrator's interest in Gawsworth grows, 'no tanto por la regular obra cuanto por el irregular personaje' (122). Parallels between the erratic and mysterious Gawsworth and other characters are drawn: thus Gawsworth reminds the narrator of Cromer-Blake (128), while a person, whose story and secrets are not told or have no addressee, is called the *antiGawsworth* (171).

But there are also points of contact with the curious narrator. The reader is informed that Gawsworth was not only an avid book collector, like the narrator, but that he was always capable of making out the book he was searching for at a glance amongst dusty second-hand collections, an ability the narrator shares with him (132). A correspondence between the two is also introduced when the image of the narrator pushing the pram carrying his newborn infant, born after his return to Madrid, is superimposed onto that of Gawsworth, watched by Durrell, impelling his own pram filled with bottles of beer:

Lo vio desaparecer empujando su cochecito alcohólico con paso tranquilo hacia la oscuridad, quizá del mismo modo que yo empujo ahora a veces el mío cuando cae la tarde sobre el Retiro, sólo que yo llevo dentro a mi niño – este niño nuevo – que aún no conozco bien y que ha de sobrevivirnos. (127)

And, after a series of speculations about Gawsworth's mysterious life, the narrator explains his curiosity is tainted by superstition, 'convencido como llegué a estar, algunas interminables tardes de primavera o Trinity, de que yo acabaría corriendo su suerte idéntica' (135). However, it is the difference between the contents of the

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<sup>35</sup> The imaginative-descriptive nature of the text accompanying these two photographs is a precursor of Marias' *Miramientos*, the collection of texts accompanying photographs (Marias 1997d).

respective prams that symbolically marks the distance between Gawsworth's and the narrator's respective fates brought about after the latter's return to Madrid.

These associations and dissociations between Gawsworth and the narrator and other characters may not be central to the narrative (although, arguably, the narrative has no real centre and it mainly consists of precisely such digressive associations), but they contribute to giving shape slowly to Gawsworth and other characters. However, the Gawsworth in *Todas las almas* does not make the transition from literary-historical figure to fictional character, he does not acquire the full status of a character until he makes his definitive appearance in Clare Bayes' past, and he is an example – as is the whole of *Todas las almas* – of the thesis that fictional characters are defined not so much by *what* they are but by *how* they are used (Hoffman and Murphy 1988, 10).<sup>36</sup>

As the narrator and Clare Bayes are ruminating over the end of their relationship in a Brighton hotel where they have escaped over the weekend for the last time, Clare recounts a tragic event which she witnessed in her childhood as an illustration to the narrator, who is reluctant to leave her, that relationships can end in tragedy if they are not allowed to end naturally. Clare's father worked as a diplomat in India when Clare was a child and the tragic story she recounts takes place in Delhi. (A link between the past and the present scenes is the fact that the hotel in which the narrator and Clare are staying looks out onto the Brighton Pavilion.) Her mother has

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<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, it is worth noting that Clare Bayes represents a significant development in Javier Marías' treatment of female characters. In *El hombre sentimental*, Natalia is a rather *flat*, voiceless, and veiled character (both literally, as her face is covered when she is seen for the first time, and metaphorically, in that she does not have a proper presence and that she virtually does not speak), although she is the first significant female character to appear in his novels. In *Todas las almas*, Clare Bayes is not only a significant character, but she has much more of a presence, she is *round* in that she is fully developed, more visible (we are not only given detailed descriptions of certain parts of her body, but we also learn what many of the motivations for her actions are), and she has a voice (in the form of direct speech). Clare Bayes is the first of Javier Marías' female characters who can – metaphorically and literally, as Clare does – *stand up* to the male ones. The development of his female characters in this and subsequent novels is an element that further bears witness to Marías' novelistic maturation.

an extramarital affair with a Briton which her father seems to tolerate at first, but when her mother becomes pregnant and is uncertain about the identity of the father, he loses patience and the mother has to leave. One evening four days after her departure, Clare is sitting in the garden, looking at a railway bridge, and waiting for the night trains to cross it before going to bed, as she always does, when she suddenly sees two figures dressed in white walking on the bridge. She recognizes her mother and her lover. Soon a train approaches and, while the lover throws himself against the side of the bridge and clings to the metal railings to escape contact with the approaching train, Clare's mother commits suicide by throwing herself into the river.

The first thing Clare tells the narrator as she begins her account of this event is the name of the lover about whom she knows little, if anything: Terry Armstrong. Inevitably, the name strikes the narrator and, as he listens to Clare's story, he starts mulling over the name. When Clare pauses for a moment, he asks a question but his mind wanders back to the name (219). And when Clare takes a break to go to the toilet, the daughter's lover's thoughts return to the name of the mother's lover:

'Terry Armstrong', pensé, y esta vez pensé algo más: 'Armstrong es muy corriente, y también lo es Terry, que en una mujer es Theresa, su diminutivo, pero en un hombre es Terence, su diminutivo. Pero Armstrong es muy corriente, hay millares en Inglaterra y los ha habido siempre, tantos más que Newton [Clare's maiden name] y casi tantos como Blake, y en cambio es raro ese compuesto de Cromer-Blake. Y Terence o Terry es también muy corriente, aunque no como John, ni como Tod, o Ted, que es Edward y Theodore. Armstrong', pensé. 'Armstrong querría decir Brazofuerte.' (221)

And, as his interest in Clare's story grows, he approaches the bed on which Clare is lying and sits by its side thinking: 'Pero todavía entonces hice caso de mi pensamiento, que sin embargo fue rápido y breve, porque lo único que alcancé a pensar [...] fue un mero nombre: "Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong"' (223). On the following page the narrator continues to speculate on whether the Armstrong in



Clare's past is the same as the one in whom he had only recently become increasingly interested.

All the while, Clare's narration has been in direct speech, quoted by the narrator, recounting past events in the past tense and in the first person. What occurs on page 225 is similar to what we saw in *El hombre sentimental*, in which the narrative forms a layer enveloping a dream of past events and past events themselves. In *Todas las almas*, as Clare's narration of the tragic event reaches its climax – the scene is set for the *dénouement*, with little Clare in the garden waiting for the trains and looking at the bridge, accompanied by her governess – the narrator ceases to allow Clare to speak directly to the reader and appropriates her narration: 'Y mientras Clare Bayes me iba contando lo que había visto y recordaba sólo con el conocimiento, yo lo fui pensando a los pies de la cama [...] "La niña inglesa mira ahora el negro puente de hierro"' (225). Clare's narration is *hijacked*, so to speak; the narrator *thinks* what Clare is telling him, introducing a mediatory element and enveloping Clare's narration in his own thoughts. Thus, he now makes it his own and over five pages (225-230) the narrator recounts the (crucial) remainder of her story in a third person narration in the present tense.

Paradoxically, this lends the story greater immediacy and also increases the suspense, mainly as a result of the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of events unfolding on the bridge. But, equally and most importantly, it allows the narrator to tell the story in his own words and style, digressing and inserting his own thoughts and making his own associations with other elements introduced earlier in the narrative of *Todas las almas*, such as John Gawsworth. The narrator *lleva la voz cantante* (as did the tenor in the preceding novel), thus allowing himself to make conjectures and further connections in the present tense between the past and present

and to refer to Terry Armstrong as John Gawsworth, making the possibility of their identity explicit:

Pero ese tren aún no aparece, y por el puente en tinieblas transitan ahora, en cambio, vacilantes y temerosas, tropezando *acaso* con los rieles, pisando la grava, dos figuras que son John Gawsworth y la madre de la niña que mira, Clare Newton, una mujer que es joven, *más joven de lo que lo es su hija esta noche en Brighton* [...] La niña ve cómo el hombre que *tal vez* es Gawsworth avanza hasta la mitad del puente, siempre llevando tras de sí a la madre, y aunque la niña aún no lo sabe – *se lo irá susurrando el aya durante su futura infancia, sin contárselo todo hasta mucho más tarde: sin contarle hasta que lo exija* –, están en el puente desde el que se ha arrojado más de una pareja de desdichados amantes [...] ella lleva la mirada baja, mientras que él la lleva alzada, *es posible que* ella tenga vértigo, que no pueda evitar mirar hacia abajo, hacia el ancho río de aguas azules (*o negras*, porque es de noche), y que además esa sea la única forma de irse acostumbrando a ellas, porque tal vez la madre sí va a arrojar, *puede que* ella esté más decidida y *que* se pregunte si Gawsworth, *o Terry Armstrong*, saltará también, como se han prometido y han planeado. *Quizá* se lo hayan prometido y lo hayan planeado y lo hayan acordado la noche anterior, la madre y el hombre, *o* durante el día, en una habitación de hotel, y lo han acordado (Clare Bayes no lo sabe, *nadie lo sabe*) porque no se les ocurre otra solución [...] Gawsworth le pasa el brazo – *su brazo fuerte* – por encima de los hombros, *como se pasa el brazo a las personas a las que se protege y quiere* [...] Y entonces Armstrong levanta el brazo con que rodea los hombros de la primera Clare Newton, se libera y la suelta, y ahora con ambas manos – *con esas manos que pilotaron aviones y que pedirán limosna* [...] “Son tantas las cosas que nos retienen”, *quizá* piensa Gawsworth aferrado a los hierros, “y todo puede aún darse.” *O quizá no lo piensa, lo sabe*. También la madre debe saberlo [...] – su cuerpo que empieza a abultarse, con lo que aún no es ni será el hermano menor de Clare Bayes – [...] la madre [...] se arroja al agua con su vestido blanco (*blanco como el pelo de Cromer-Blake, y como el de Rylands, y como los pechos de Muriel, la falsa gorda de Wychwood Forest*) [...] En él [puente] sólo queda durante unos segundos la otra figura blanca, que *quizá* vomita sobre el río Yamuna como un mendigo oxoniense sobre el río Isis, antes de que se aleje por él corriendo, espantado, el último rey de Redonda, el escritor John Gawsworth, el *Escritor de Verdad* que ya no volverá a escribir ni dejará ningún rastro. O *acaso* sólo una petaca metálica que *tal vez* sigue allí desde aquella noche, aplastada, oxidada y vacía entre los rieles. (225- 230 – my italics)

It is in this passage that Gawsworth is established as a character, despite the fact that it is not certain that the Terry Armstrong in Clare’s past is the same person as Gawsworth. The possibility that they are both the same person is partly introduced

by way of the identical name (Terry Armstrong, Gawsworth's real name), the fact that Gawsworth had been in India, and that none of the information provided by Clare excludes the possibility of identifying him as Gawsworth. This possibility is then further exploited by the narrator in his filtering of the story witnessed by Clare. Interweaving it in his thoughts allows him to recount the associations he makes, enabling him to call her mother's lover both 'Gawsworth' and 'Armstrong', rather than merely by the latter name, as Clare did since she is not familiar with the Gawsworth persona. It allows him to allude to the literal translation of the English name introduced earlier ('Gawsworth le pasa el brazo – *su brazo fuerte* – por encima de los hombros'); to add his own thoughts regarding a matter related to the specific object of narration, aphoristic thoughts that arise through the narration and are of a general, conjectural, theoretical, or philosophical nature ('como se pasa el brazo a las personas a las que se protege y quiere'); and to insert information relating to Gawsworth with which he is familiar ('con esas manos que pilotaron aviones y que pedirán limosna').

Furthermore, it permits him to make associations between Clare's story and the narrative of his stay in Oxford, thus also connecting two seemingly unrelated, narrative planes and, concomitantly, the past and present within those ('Clare Newton, una mujer que es joven, *más joven de lo que lo es su hija esta noche en Brighton*'; 'la madre [...] se arroja al agua con su vestido blanco [*blanco como el pelo de Cromer-Blake, y como el de Rylands, y como los pechos de Muriel, la falsa gorda de Wychwood Forest*]'). In addition, the telling of Clare's story in his own words allows the narrator to incorporate conjecture in his narrative, stylistically announced by expressions of possibility we have seen in the previous two novels, such as *es posible que*, *puede que* and adverbs of doubt like *quizá*, *acaso*, and *tal vez*, all followed mostly by the subjunctive mode. In this associative, conjectural aspect,

this scene is similar to the two highlighted in the discussion of *El hombre sentimental*, the difference being that the two scenes in the earlier novel were entirely conjectural, whereas this one is not.

However, in *Todas las almas* there is a scene identical in structure and narrative technique to the two in *El hombre sentimental*, where the narrator recounts an entirely imaginary scene of interrogation involving Alec Dewar, initiated through the use of expressions of probability and adverbs of doubt with the imperfect subjunctive, followed by the conditional bracketing direct speech in the present tense, and culminating in the scene being narrated in the present tense (177-180). This exploration of the possible or the potential, the latency of aspects of life which would remain latent, were it not for their being allowed to surface through an imaginative mind that makes explicit connections, is something that is very characteristic of Javier Marías' writings from *El hombre sentimental* onwards. The above passage, which imaginatively weaves the figure of Gawsorth into Clare's past and the narrative as a whole (thus also further interweaving reality and fiction by making a writer who had existed into a fictional character), contains all the stylistic elements prevalent in his writing, namely imaginative associations characterized by conjecture, repetition, aphorisms, errancy, and digressions. The passage is also 'clear proof that the power of a character or an episode is not inherent in itself alone but is dependent on its precise place in the composition of which it is a part', as Milton Hindus asserts in his discussion of the differences between Proust's *Jean Santeuil* and *À la recherche du temps perdu*; 'no better argument exists for the importance of form in art' (Hindus 1954, 7 – my italics).

The process of association permeates the entire novel and is not limited to characters – a number of recurrent themes are woven into the narrative through various forms of repetition. The motif of consanguineous and non-consanguineous

relationships is repeated, for example, in relation to Madrid and Oxford respectively (in Oxford the narrator has only non-consanguineous relationships which he considers inferior to consanguineous ones – ‘¿por qué no puedo pensar en cosas más fructíferas e interesantes? Las relaciones no consanguíneas jamás los son’ [77]; ‘Es el trámite con que deben cumplir para enaltecerse las relaciones no consanguíneas, que jamás son fructíferas ni muy interesantes’ [208-209] – such as the one he does establish after his return to Madrid where he marries and has a child). Oxford and Madrid are, in turn, associated with death and life respectively, in a variety of ways: Oxford is a place where the narrator has no fruitful relationship – no blood relationship – and it is also portrayed as a place ‘conservado en almíbar’, governed by a stillness and outside the world and outside time, where the narrator has very little to do and where everybody works very little, whereas Madrid is full of real activity, consanguineous relationships, and life. As Elide Pittarello puts it:

La fenomenología del destierro, con su variedad de relaciones a plazo, parte pues de un simbolismo geográfico arbitrario, que corta horizontalmente la tierra por la mitad, atribuyendo una quietud mortecina a la parte septentrional e insular y, por contraste, un dinamismo vivificador a la parte meridional y continental. Juzgado desde un punto de vista tan subjetivo, Oxford es un observatorio de la inexistencia, un lugar fuera del tiempo y fuera del mundo. (Pittarello 1996, 24)

Then, at the end of the narrator’s relation of Clare’s story (198), we have an association of all the various rivers introduced throughout the narrative, which in turn are already linked to the various places and their inhabitants of significance in the narration, thus forming a whole chain of associations (Yamuna–Delhi–Clare Newton/Clare Bayes/John Gawsworth, Cherwell–Oxford–Rylands, Evenlode and Windrush–Wychwood Forest–Muriel). Moreover, towards the end of the narrator’s stay in Oxford, he comes across Clare, accompanied by her son and her father, in the Ashmolean Museum and, as he follows them, he discovers an uncanny likeness in

their three faces, to the extent that he asserts that they are all one and the same face and that he has therefore also kissed the old man and the child<sup>37</sup>:

He besado y he sido besado también por el niño y también por el viejo, y esta es una de las ideas que según Alan Marriott pueden o no asociarse, pero si se asocian infunden horror o provocan espanto: la idea del niño y la idea del beso, la idea del beso y la idea del viejo, la idea del niño y la idea del viejo. (196)

It is the association of the three faces and the three ideas (kiss, child, old man) which in this instance produces horror.<sup>38</sup> And it is this vertiginousness and the occasional horror and perversity of the associations which lead the narrator to qualify his state at the time as disturbed (198).<sup>39</sup>

It is precisely the credible or convincing and therefore successful association of ideas, exemplified in these instances, and particularly in the passage on Gawsworth, which characterizes *Todas las almas* as a whole and which is not only at the core of Marías' writing, but also at the core of all imaginative writing.<sup>40</sup>

### c) *The imagination (again)*

Significantly, as we discussed in the previous chapter, the process of association is not governed by reason. The associations are not planned or premeditated. Rather,

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<sup>37</sup> This passage strongly echoes Thomas Hardy's poem 'Heredity': 'I am the family face;/Flesh perishes, I live on,/Projecting trait and trace/through time to times anon' (Hardy 1984, 166-167).

<sup>38</sup> This process of inducing horror through association is introduced earlier in the novel by Marriott with reference to Machen's horrors which, according to him, are a result of the association of two or more ideas which, in themselves, are not horrific or suggestive. The example that Marriot uses to illustrate his point is the association of a beautiful florist with his own, three-legged dog (102-103). After his return to Madrid and the birth of his son, the narrator even wonders what his son's horror-inducing link might be (108).

<sup>39</sup> Robert Spires sees in the associations established in the Ashmolean Museum the subversion of the objectification of woman: 'The connecting lines do not merely lead from one point to another, but they backtrack, forming a vertiginous communal web. Identities, even genders, are erased; Clare is not merely Clare, she is simultaneously her father and her son, the three fused into simulacra of each other. What is more, since he now realizes that Clare alone was not the object of the sexual passion he felt and expressed, that passion seems not merely ridiculous but also somewhat horribly perverse. In effect, the fusion of Clare with her son and father represents another disturbance in the system; it serves to subvert another pillar of our Western discursive tradition: the feminine object of desire' (Spires 1996, 228).

<sup>40</sup> See previous chapter.



they arise through the suspension of reason whilst writing or narrating. This is why, as I mentioned earlier, the narrator of *Todas las almas* likens the association of ideas making up his narration to a temporary state of mental disturbance, underlining the suspension of reason which facilitates the association of ideas at the very heart of imaginative writing, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

The suspension of reason is imperative for the creative imagination and, in *La inspiración y el estilo*, Benet elaborates on this further, arguing that it is the acquisition of taste, independent of logic and reason, that ultimately leads to the development of style, and that it is taste which allows a work to exert a fascination understood as the suspension of judgment. Thus, the writer only begins to come under the influence of this fascination after the acquisition of taste which leads to the development of style (Benet 1973, 86). As became apparent in *El siglo*, Marías was in the process of developing a style which comes to fruition from *El hombre sentimental* onwards. And it is because of this development of style that Marías' writing has been under the influence of a fascination which does not impose constraints on the free reign of the imagination and that the imaginative associations which we see are allowed to take place. That is why, for instance, the initial introduction to John Gawsworth seems, at first, rather trivial and unrelated to the rest of the narrative until he is woven into the narrative web towards the end, where he is connected to Clare's past, the narrator, and other elements of the narrative as a whole, forming effective links which convert the initially insignificant ideas into meaningful ones. And it is because they are indiscriminately yet delicately associated with each other that a whole spectrum of characters ranging from real people (Gawsworth), to entirely fictional (for example, Clare Bayes) co-exist in the narrative without undermining its credibility. So, rather than asking 'Is *Todas las almas* an autobiographical novel?' or 'How autobiographical a novel is it?', or perhaps *after*

asking this question, we should no longer ask *what* the origins of the elements making up the novel are but *how* they are combined into a whole, not *what* the referents are but *how* they are associated. Because, ultimately, through the imagination, all of the novel's elements and characters are made to relate on one level, irrespective of whether they are inspired by real or fictional people, in that they are equivalent in the way they participate in the narrative. What is important is not the origin of the material, 'which may or may not be interesting', to put it in Ruth Christie's words, 'but the telling itself' (Christie 1995a, 79).

As we saw, in the processes of germination and association, the imagination filters material coming from any source, selecting, discriminating, associating, interweaving, and shaping that material, and thus altering it, taking liberties with it, and levelling it on the narrative plane. 'It isn't enough merely to observe; we must order and shape what we have seen. Reality in my view ought to be no more than a spring board', Flaubert once wrote (Allott 1959, 69); 'Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection', Henry James argued (Allott 1959, 75); 'Puede que el aprendizaje más severo y difícil del novelista sea éste: el modo de manipular la experiencia para convertirla en ficción', writes Muñoz Molina (1993, 17); 'Pues sólo si uno es capaz de imaginar lo que ha ocurrido [...] de repetirlo en la imaginación, verá las historias, y sólo si tiene la paciencia de contárselas y volvérselas a contar [...] será capaz de contarlas bien', Isak Dinesen explained, as Marías cites in his preface to *Ehrengard* (Marías 1990c, 12), and he repeats the same quotation again in *Negra espalda*, where a significant subclause is added: 'Y sólo si tiene la paciencia de llevarlas largo tiempo dentro de sí' (Marías 1998a, 370).

So the process of the imagination, the germination and association of ideas, makes empirical or biographical material recountable. Echoing Dinesen, Marías himself argues in an article entitled ‘Imaginar para creer’:

Pero es que justamente para contar eso, lo que nos ocurre nunca basta con haberlo vivido, ni siquiera con saber observarlo ni saber explicarlo, ni siquiera con entenderlo, sino además hay que imaginarlo, y a eso no parece hoy dispuesto casi nadie. Y sin embargo, una vez imaginado lo real y vivido, lo mirado y oído, lo descartado y conocido, lo omitido y perdido, quizá sea sólo entonces cuando pueda uno empezar a contárselo, y a creérselo. (Marías 1998b, 17)

A fictional narrative lacks conviction if its material has not been filtered by the imagination (Marías 1998a, 195-196). Or, as Muñoz Molina puts it: ‘Pues hay que tener presente siempre que el único modo que tiene el novelista de decir la verdad es inventando: inventando las cosas tal como son’ (1993, 36). The empirical material has to be imagined, it has to linger or *pernoctate* in the imagination, as is evidenced in *Todas las almas*, in a metanarrative statement which echoes this process of imagining the real, when Clare finds herself able to recount the story of her mother’s tragic death precisely because it lingered in her imagination for a long time: ‘Es muy probable que si ahora lo cuento como si lo recordara se deba sólo a que ahora lo sé y a que *llevo años imaginándolo*, desde que lo sé’ (223-224 – my italics).

This is exactly how the narrator proceeds when he recounts Clare’s tale and the entire story of his stay in Oxford two years after his return to Madrid, during which time the story has lingered in his imagination and he has woven it into a narrative whole. This is also how Marías himself goes about writing *Todas las almas*. Because of this process of the imagination, this literary filtering, this imagining of all the material, including the biographical and empirical, which levels it by interconnecting it within a narrative, it is very often impossible to decide what is fictional and what is not. As Elide Pittarello asserts:

El desafío de su escritura consiste justamente en someter cualquier material al mismo proceso de indeterminación que no permite reconocer la diferencia entre lo que podría ser ficticio y es verdadero o lo que podría ser verdadero y es ficticio. (Pittarello 1996, 22)

Ultimately, all the material, irrespective of its origins, becomes fictional because it becomes part of a narrative which constitutes a fiction, in that it has undergone this process of distillation and association, making the way in which it has been woven into the narrative significant but its origins ultimately irrelevant. This is precisely why a number of critics read *Todas las almas* as a fictional narrative and not an autobiographical one. Robert Spires makes no mention at all of an (auto)biographical dimension to the novel, concentrating, like Constanino Bértolo, on its fictional nature (Spires 1996, Bértolo 1989a). Darío Villanueva argues that ‘lo emotivo se sobrepone a lo referencial’ (1989, 7). In their analyses of *Todas las almas*, Alfonso de Toro emphasizes the fictionality of the autobiographical elements, as does Ruth Christie, who argues that ‘*Todas las almas* is not an autobiographical novel in the sense that it mixes fact and fiction in the name of fiction’ (de Toro 1994 and 1995, Christie 1995a, 73). Pedro Chía considers the autobiographical aspect of Mariás’ fifth novel a mere excuse to tell a story (Chía 1989a). And Inés Blanca makes the irrelevance of the origins of the material explicit, whilst highlighting the importance of imaginative association:

No tiene, por tanto, casi apenas importancia, pienso, si el material es inventado o no inventado. Importa sobre todo la trama de vinculaciones que se establece en el texto, la creación de esos vínculos, la relación entre las cosas y los personajes; la relación, en fin, entre imaginación y realidad. (Blanca 1994, 220)

In his discussion of *Todas las almas*, Ricardo Gullón asks: ‘¿Fue vivida la invención antes de ser creada? Poco importa la biografía del autor y lo que de su vida pudiera rastrearse en la narración’ (Gullón 1994, 327). In fact, the autobiographical element in *Todas las almas* is irrelevant, other than to demonstrate the way in which the

novel has an independent existence through the manner – the interplay between imagination and style – in which any matter is treated.

Echoing de Man's argument that autobiography is a figure of reading and understanding (de Man 1984, 67-81), Javier Marías asserts the following in *Negra espalda*:

En realidad la vieja aspiración de cualquier cronista o superviviente, relatar lo ocurrido, dar cuenta de lo acaecido, dejar constancia de los hechos y delitos y hazañas, es una mera ilusión o quimera, o mejor dicho, la propia frase, ese propio concepto, son ya metafóricos y forman parte de la ficción. 'Relatar lo ocurrido' es inconcebible y vano, o bien es sólo posible como invención. También la idea de testimonio es vana y no ha habido testigo que en verdad pudiera cumplir con su cometido. (Marías 1998aa, 10)

This is a simple acknowledgment of the impossibility of undertaking the task of recounting that which has occurred, which is the central tenet of traditional autobiography and biography. Marías' reasoning is the same as de Man's: it is not the referent that determines the figure (autobiography), but it is the illusion of reference which is part of the figure and, therefore, fictional. Recounting that which has been experienced is only possible as a fiction. 'Puede que el aprendizaje más severo y difícil del novelista sea éste: el modo de manipular la experiencia para convertirla en ficción, o dicho en términos aristotélicos, de hacer forma la materia', says Muñoz Molina (1993, 17). Javier Marías' *Todas las almas* feeds on empirical reality, but this material is not aimed at an autobiographical undertaking. The aim is a literary one: the material is re-worked by the creative imagination, where it germinates and is associated and woven into a narrative whole.

In this narrative, the relationship between narrator and author is imbued with purposeful ambiguity by the latter in an attempt to make the reader oscillate between two readings. The similarities between some of the novel's characters and existing people do not allow for their unproblematic identification, except in the case of John

Gawsworth who, in turn, is also swallowed up in the narrative web and converted into a fictional character. The misreadings which arise are a consequence of the lack of recognition of the independent ontological status of fiction. The readings and the misreadings of the novel are also determined by what are very complex illocutionary forces surrounding the different publications of the novel. To see *Todas las almas* as an autobiographical novel or a *roman à clef* is to misrepresent the relationship between the narrative and the empirical world where everything is subject to the imagination. And it is also a failure to recognize that telling stories constitutes a separate language game, as Searle argues (1979a). A work of fiction like *Todas las almas* is constituted by pretended illocutions which are made possible by conventions which suspend the normal operation of rules relating illocutionary acts to the world (the connections between language and reality). Telling stories, as in the case of this novel, is therefore a separate language game and the misreading consists of not playing this game, not accepting or recognizing the conventions that surround it, not suspending the operation of rules relating illocutionary acts to the world.

Admittedly, Marías does tease or ‘mislead’ readers and also those in whom some of the characters are partly inspired by giving *Todas las almas* the appearance of this relationship to the world. This invites misreadings, but mostly from those who cry out for what de Man elsewhere calls ‘the fresh air of referential meaning’ (de Man 1979, 4) – the narrative’s relationship to the life of the author in the case of an autobiographical reading – those who already seem to have some difficulty in recognizing the primary importance of imagination and style in the narrative and who tend to undertake, to use Jonathan Culler’s words, a *symptomatic* interpretation, a referential rather than a hermeneutical reading (Culler 1997, 69). Therefore the specificity of the object is neglected because the text becomes secondary in importance and what lies ‘behind’ or ‘underneath’ it – elements of the narrator’s



biography, in this case – is foregrounded. Antonio Muñoz Molina calls this distrust, this quest for referentiality, an autobiographical superstition (1993, 33). It may very well be that the explanation for the quest for referentiality of an autobiographical reading lies in a mistrust of imagination, as Javier Marías suggests in *Negra espalda*:

Siempre se dice que detrás de toda novela hay una secuencia de vida o realidad del autor, por pálida o tenue o intermitente que sea, o aunque esté transfigurada. Se dice eso como si se desconfiara de la imaginación y de la inventiva, también como si el lector o los críticos necesitaran un asidero para no ser víctimas de un extraño vértigo, el de lo absolutamente inventado o sin experiencia ni fundamento, y no quisieran sentir el horror a lo que parece existir mientras lo leemos – a veces respira y susurra y aun persuade – y sin embargo nunca ha sido, o el ridículo último de tomar en serio lo que es una figuración tan sólo, se lucha contra la agazapada conciencia de que leer novelas es algo pueril, o al menos impropio de la vida adulta que siempre nos va en aumento. (1998a, 15-16)

This emphasis on the autobiographical elements of fiction reflects the belief that the legitimacy of literature resides in its similarity to the real world. In looking at *Todas las almas*, this quest for referentiality, invited, in part, by a number of exergual marks and certain features of some of the novel's characters, the isolation of and emphasis on the autobiographical aspect would be misrepresenting the essence of the narrative since this novel is the crystallization of a literary process in which elements, such as the autobiographical ones, do not occupy a privileged position within it. Instead, like the real Gawsworth, they are fictionalized, subjected to the interrelated workings of style and imagination, filtered, associated, and interwoven with other elements, and are therefore subservient to the process of storytelling. This demonstrates not only the importance of form and style in Marías' writing and in art, but also, ultimately, that art has its own ontology.

## Chapter V

### *Corazón tan blanco:* The effects of repetition

First published in 1992, *Corazón tan blanco* is Javier Marías' sixth novel.<sup>1</sup> The novel's driving force, the element that is foregrounded and that lends it its greatest impetus and impact, is repetition, to the extent that the novel could be said to be about repetition.<sup>2</sup> Although already an element of Marías' style from *El siglo* onwards, for the first time in Marías' work repetition acquires a veritably commanding presence as it rules over virtually every aspect of his sixth novel. Therefore, not only can it not be overlooked, but it is imperative that it be analyzed in its manifestations in this narrative, since it becomes a fundamental feature of Marías' novelistic development.

After a short look at the element of digression and a brief introduction to the concept of repetition, this chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the various types of repetitions to be found in the novel and, in particular, the variety of the effects they have. The six principal sets of effects of repetition I have identified and will discuss are the following: 1) echoing and foreshadowing, 2) linking and unity, 3) rhythmic association, 4) the particular temporal movement and its consequences, 5) the emphasis on the materiality of language, and 6) configurations of the uncanny. We shall also observe how form and style, in this case repetition, determine the content through the way in which themes like death, matrimony, the interconnectedness of past and present, or

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<sup>1</sup> All page references are to the 1992 Anagrama edition of the novel, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Christie affirms that the novel 'is so well written that style steals the show' (Christie 1998, 92). So, once again, formal aspects of writing predominate in Marías' work. In this case, repetition is the dominant stylistic feature.

instigation arise and are shaped through repetition, thus, yet again, foregrounding the importance of form and style in Marías' work.

### *Digressing again*

Javier Marías went about writing *Corazón tan blanco* in the usual errant way we outlined in Chapter III. He claims he had no objectives when he started writing, and that he did not know what the novel was about nor what the plot would be or how it would end.<sup>3</sup> Marías has asserted that the reason that he gradually realized, after completing it, what *Corazón tan blanco* was about, was precisely the element of digression: 'Pero si he llegado a saber todo esto ha sido porque [...] mientras escribía me he visto obligado a detenerme por una divagación o una digresión o un inciso' (1993l, 93).

As we saw in Chapter III, this purposeful lack of project and uncertainty, this disinterest in foresight, allows him to digress and thus discover things *while* he writes, rather than determining them beforehand, and he affirms that the narrative does not disintegrate, because he abides by what he has already written, not allowing himself to alter anything retrospectively (Marías 1993l, 92). This means that the writer has to rely on what is already written for the subsequent creation of the remaining narrative. I would say, therefore, that the main reason his narratives do not fall apart at the seams are the imaginative associative processes highlighted in previous chapters (a writer's ability to see the relationships and connections between elements, thus convincingly

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<sup>3</sup> An anecdote Marías recounts bears witness to this relative ignorance and errancy: 'Este libro lo he escrito a lo largo de año y medio y recuerdo que le comentaba a Juan Benet: "Pues sí, ya tengo cien páginas." "¿Y de qué trata?", preguntaba Benet. "Pues no lo sé muy bien", contestaba yo. Y cuando llevaba doscientas páginas era como una broma: "¿Ya sabes de qué trata?", seguía Benet. "Pues no, me parece que todavía no lo sé demasiado bien." Cuando terminé seguía un poco en las mismas' (Marías 1992c, iv).

establishing links and uniting the whole narrative) coupled with, as will become apparent in the present discussion, the prevalence of repetition.

The errant nature of Javier Marías' writing is all the more surprising in the case of *Corazón tan blanco* because the novel belies it through its internal symmetries, its overall unity, and its rhythm. In fact, the novel gives the impression of having been exhaustively plotted and planned in advance. That is, for example, why Karasek calls Marías an 'amazingly skilful engineer of novels'.<sup>4</sup> Despite or because of his way of writing, despite or because of his errant and digressive style, his narratives, and *Corazón tan blanco* in particular, achieve an effect of unity which, as I hope to show, is ultimately the result of repetition, particularly remarkable in the case of his sixth novel where, for the first time, repetition becomes by far the most significant stylistic element.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Introduction to repetition*

No narrative escapes repetition. In Saussurean terms the sign itself is a repetition of the thing signified. Language, as communication, is repetition in that its elements become understandable, recognizable, and meaningful precisely through their recurrence: 'Only because a spoken element repeats or conforms to an essentially repeatable form can it be recognized as language' (Lawlor 1983, 329). On the most general level, therefore, all language is repetition.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Der Erzähler Marías, der ein erstaunlich geschickter Romankonstrukteur ist, ein Ingenieur der Verstreungen und gewaltigen Verspannungen des Innenlebens seiner Figuren' (Karasek 1996, 195).

<sup>5</sup> In the case of Marías, to talk about repetition as a 'device' would be an overstatement in that it would emphasize too conscious and functional a stylistic approach, detracting from the subtle and often undoubtedly unconscious nature of the processes producing repetition. I have therefore chosen to speak of it as a literary element rather than a device.

On another level, repetition is a fundamental element of all narratives. Firstly, all narratives have to contain certain basic textual elements that bind them and ‘allow the reader to distinguish one work from another’ (Naddaff 1991, 64). Secondly, as J. Hillis Miller argues, narratives, in order to be narratives, have to contain three basic elements: ‘beginning, sequence, reversal; personification, or, more accurately and technically stated, prosopopoeia, bringing protagonist, antagonist, and witness “to life”; *some patterning or repetition of elements surrounding a nuclear figure or complex word*’ (1995, 75 – my italics).

Given, then, that no narrative can escape repetition for the above reasons, why treat repetition as something out of the ordinary? The answer to this question lies in the fact that ‘any work can emphasize and manipulate its repetitive scaffolding to a greater or lesser extent’, as Sandra Naddaff maintains (1991, 64). The degree of presence of repetition is therefore in positive correlation to its importance as a stylistic element: the more pronounced its presence, the greater its importance in and for the narrative. In the case of *Corazón tan blanco*, even a reader not particularly receptive to such aspects of writing cannot help but notice and wonder about the regular recurrence of repetitions, as though obeying a law of frequency, the ubiquity of various aspects of repetition, the effects it has and its significance.

It should be noted at this point that repetition of any sort is never really more than near repetition. For example, the passage of time alone between the occurrence and re-occurrence of something makes the identity of the two impossible, as it prevents exact repetition of events, irrespective of their similarity, simply because any repeated event occurs at a time later than that of the event it ‘repeats’. Furthermore, the dissimilarities are not only of a temporal nature, as Gérard Genette argues:

Un événement n'est pas seulement capable de se produire: il peut aussi se reproduire, ou se répéter: le soleil se lève tous les jours. Bien entendu, l'*identité* de ces multiples occurrences est en toute rigueur contestable: 'le soleil' qui 'se lève' chaque matin n'est pas exactement le même d'un jour à l'autre – pas plus que le 'Genève-Paris de 8 h 45', cher à Ferdinand de Saussure, ne se compose chaque soir des mêmes wagons accrochés à la même locomotive. La 'répétition' est en fait une construction de l'esprit, qui élimine de chaque occurrence tout ce qui lui appartient en propre pour n'en conserver que ce qu'elle partage avec toutes les autres de la même classe, et qui est une abstraction: 'le soleil', 'le matin', 'se lever'. Cela est bien connu, et je ne le rappelle que pour préciser une fois pour toutes que l'on nommera ici 'événements identiques', ou 'récurrence du même événement' une série de plusieurs événements semblables et *considérés dans leur seule ressemblance*. (Genette 1972, 145)

Hence, as Genette points out, the concept of repetition is the result of the elimination of the elements particular to each occurrence, the abstraction of their common elements, and their consideration in terms of these similarities. So, as in Genette's discussion, in the present one, 'repetition of the same' is never more than near repetition of elements explored in terms of their similarities.

It would be useful to distinguish broadly between two categories of repetition: the repetition in the narrative of extratextual and intratextual elements. On the most general level, the consideration of any language and representation as repetition could be included in this first category. More specifically, any references to other texts, a form of intertextuality, in the form of the recurrence of motifs, themes, characters from texts of other authors or the author's own works – and one could include under this heading autobiographical references, if the concept of texts by the same author is extended to include the author's *bios* – would also constitute forms of repetition of extratextual elements. Although, as we shall see, there are instances of such extratextual repetitions in *Corazón tan blanco*, the emphasis in our discussion is on those elements pertaining to the narrative and repeated within it. The range of these is quite large and includes virtually every possible size and scope of repetition: repetition of phonemes, letters (as



in an alliteration), morphemes, words, clauses, sentences, descriptions, objects, gestures, actions, scenes, images, ideas, motifs, and themes.

These repetitions have a variety of effects and consequences in *Corazón tan blanco*, which, although listed separately, are fundamentally interrelated: they produce echoing effects, foreshadow events, emphasize the materiality of language, emphasize and develop meaning, create motifs and themes producing rhythmic patterns whilst foregrounding the temporal movement of narrative, link scenes and ideas, unify the narrative as a whole, and, on a more general level, form nodal points, points of intersection to which other parts of the text lead and from which the connections to others can be traced. In addition, repetitions draw attention to something other than themselves, inviting a reading in terms of their interrelationship with the narrative structure as a whole, ultimately also attesting a compulsion to repeat which, in turn, foregrounds the uncanny nature of the narration.

### *I. Echoing and foreshadowing*

Repetitions are echoes of past moments; but they can also contain echoes of future moments, foreshadowing things to come. Repetitions involve this backward and forward eddying, this regressive and progressive temporal movement. In his book on repetition, Hillis Miller says of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* that it 'is a chain of repetitions, each event referring back to others which it both explains and is explained by, while at the same time it prefigures those which will occur in the future' (1982, 34). The same can be said of *Corazón tan blanco*.

It should be noted at this point that *Corazón tan blanco* is the second of Marías' novels to be explicitly set in Spain, the first one being *El hombre sentimental*, and the

first one populated by mostly Spanish characters, all of whom also reside in Spain, in this case, in Madrid. (There is, therefore, a certain continuity in terms of the setting between the previous novel and this one, as the narrator of the former left Oxford and returned to Madrid at the end of the narration and married a woman named Luisa, which is also the name of the narrator's wife in *Corazón tan blanco*, although I am not suggesting that the two novels share the same narrator – there are certain differences between them, as will become evident.) However, the protagonist of this novel still travels frequently and the novel is not entirely set in Madrid: the other settings are Havana, New York, and Geneva.

The novel is divided into sixteen sections or unnumbered chapters. The first sentence plunges the reader into the entrails of the narrative:

No he querido saber, pero he sabido que una de las niñas, cuando ya no era niña y no hacía mucho que había regresado de su viaje de bodas, entró en el cuarto de baño, se puso frente al espejo, se abrió la blusa, se quitó el sostén y se buscó el corazón con la punta de la pistola de su propio padre, que estaba en el comedor con parte de la familia y tres invitados. (11)

The shot that is then fired unleashes the chain of events affecting the narrator and recounted by him, which make up the novel.

The girl who commits suicide was the second wife of the narrator's father, Teresa. One of the questions this beginning introduces is the reason for this suicide, a question that remains in abeyance, like a number of less central ones, until the penultimate chapter. Creating an element of suspense and uncertainty, the mystery and secrecy surrounding the suicide constitutes another example of the structural importance of uncertainty in Marías' narratives, something we already saw in evidence in his second novel, and indicates that the novel will be following the model structure of classical detective fiction from Sophocles' *Oedipus* onwards (events which have taken place prior

to the present moment of the narration will gradually be revealed and will shed light on the present). In addition, it also highlights one of the novel's themes: the effects of the past on the present and the interrelationship of the two. The suicide took place before the narrator's birth; the father to be, Ranz, went on to marry Teresa's sister, Juana, the narrator's mother. So, the narrator's existence, as he himself recognises in the first sentence of the second section, is a direct result of this suicide: 'Eso fue hace mucho tiempo, cuando yo aún no había nacido ni tenía la menor posibilidad de nacer, es más, sólo a partir de entonces tuve posibilidad de nacer' (17; note the double epiphora of the verb *nacer*, firmly linking his birth to that event).

It should be noted that the story of the woman committing suicide is of an autobiographical origin (a repetition of events pertaining to the author's life): a relative of Marías' took her own life two weeks after returning from her honeymoon in exactly the same way (Marías 1993d). The narrator's recurring preoccupation with the chance events determining life and death, another theme of the novel, is echoed a few years later in *Negra espalda del tiempo*, foregrounding it as a recurring theme in his work.<sup>6</sup>

#### *a) To know or not to know*

The repetition, in the form of polyptoton, of two forms of the verb *saber* in the first line of the novel, succinctly prefigures the story's unfolding from the narrator's reluctance to know about the past, to past events gradually being laid bare. However, the first line also shows that the narrator, Juan, unlike the more traditional detective, is unwilling to delve into the past. Like the narrator of *Todas las almas*, he is a contemplative observer and

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<sup>6</sup> 'Es todo tan azaroso y ridículo que no se entiende cómo podemos dotar de trascendencia alguna al hecho de nuestro nacimiento o nuestra muerte, determinados por combinaciones erráticas tan antojadizas e imprevisibles como la voz del tiempo cuando aún no ha pasado' (1998a, 378).

voyeur, ultimately dependent on his considerably more active and less self-conscious wife in coaxing his father, the repository of the secret, into casting light on the mystery. In this respect, *Corazón tan blanco* is an 'anti-detective novel', as it relates the revelation of a crime nobody other than the guilty party knows about nor, at least initially, *wants* to know about.

This first line of the novel, his learning about the past notwithstanding his desire not to know, is insistently echoed throughout the narrative. The second paragraph of the second section of the novel begins as follows: 'La verdad es que si en tiempos recientes he querido saber lo que sucedió hace mucho ha sido justamente a causa de mi matrimonio (pero más bien no he querido, y lo he sabido)' (17-18). In chapter eight, when the narrator learns for the first time about the suicide of Teresa from Custardoy, a friend of his father, who also lets slip that Ranz had married three times and not twice as the narrator had previously thought, he makes an observation which constitutes an aphorism (a stylistic feature prevalent in Marías' work from *El siglo* onwards and discussed in Chapter II): 'Es difícil saber si uno quería saber o seguir ignorando algo una vez que ya lo sabe (137).'<sup>7</sup> (The opening lines of the novel are echoed when Custardoy, in a precise repetition, describes Teresa's suicide using exactly the same words as those used by the narrator on the first page of the narrative [139]; in terms of the logic of the narrative, the narrator would therefore have repeated Custardoy's description, since he learned the detailed circumstances from him.) This thought is echoed five pages later in a series of repetitions of the verb *saber*: 'Lo que sí es posible es no querer saber nada cuando aún no se sabe, después ya no, él tenía razón, más vale saber las cosas, pero sólo

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<sup>7</sup> Incidentally, the name 'Custardoy' forms part of Marías' own family tree and thus is an instance of an extratextual (biographical) repetition: his great grandmother was a Custardoy. Marías has also used the name in a short story based on a true story about a curse of his great grandfather and great uncle, 'El viaje de Isaac' (Marías 1993g, 107-113). The character Custardoy from the present novel reappears in the short story 'Figuras inacabadas' (Marías 1996a, 67-74).

cuando ya se saben (yo aún no sabía)' (142). The narrator then decides he does not wish to know more about this revelation: 'No quise saber más en aquel momento' (143).

When, in the antepenultimate chapter and upon his wife's instigation, another friend of Ranz's tells them more about the father's first marriage, the narrator remarks: 'Y entonces Villalobos siguió contando lo que no he querido saber, pero he sabido' (247).<sup>8</sup>

Finally, in the penultimate chapter, Ranz divulges the secret surrounding his first marriage and the cause of Teresa's suicide to Luisa and, unknowingly, to the narrator, who first overhears and then eavesdrops on the conversation from the bedroom. Ranz's secret amounts to the following. Approximately 40 years previous to the present moment of the narration, Ranz had worked and resided in Havana for two years where he met, and reluctantly married, a Cuban. After marrying, he met Teresa who was visiting Cuba with her sister and mother, who had wanted to visit the island after leaving it in her childhood (their mother, who then becomes the narrator's grandmother on his mother's side, was originally from Cuba and it is noteworthy that in this respect the author's biography is repeated within the narrative: Mariás' grandmother on his mother's side was also Cuban). They fell in love but realized they had no future together. The day before Teresa's return to Spain she innocently speculated that the only way they could be together was if Ranz's wife were to die. Eventually, in order to marry Teresa, Ranz murdered his Cuban wife, killing her first and then setting fire to the flat to cover it up as an accident and, on their subsequent honeymoon, Ranz told his second wife that he had killed so as to be with her, partly because he had remembered what she had once said to him in Havana. After learning that Ranz had committed murder and that she had

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<sup>8</sup> Again, the name 'Villalobos' is repeated from Mariás' *bios* (it is that of a former schoolteacher). Villalobos replaced the character del Diestro, the Spanish professor from *Todas las almas* based on the real Francisco Rico, who was initially the one Mariás had intended for this scene, as he explains in *Negra espalda del tiempo*, where the reasons for this substitution are also given (Mariás 1998a, 57-74).

instigated it, Juana could no longer live with herself nor with Ranz and committed suicide. At a given moment, Ranz echoes the narrator's words as he explains how he told Teresa the secret relating to his first marriage that led to her death: ‘ “Teresa tal vez no quiso saber, o mejor dicho no habría querido. Pero yo le dije algo de pronto, no me controlé, lo bastante, y entonces ya no pudo seguir sin querer, quiso saber, tuvo que escucharlo” ’ (267). He adds that, on the other hand, he never told Juana, his third wife, what he had told Teresa, his second, regarding his first wife. Juana never asked him about it; ‘ “Quizá ella sabía que era mejor no saber, si había algo que saber y yo no había contado” ’ (271).

These successive echoes of the initial line ‘no he querido saber, pero he sabido’, the multiple reiterations of the verb *saber*, are repeated with variations throughout the novel (there are also other repetitions of this verb: for example, 80, 200-201, 216-217, 265, 274-275, 280-281), and culminate in Ranz's story where the narrator, Luisa, and the reader learn that the reason Teresa died was because she came to learn Ranz's secret and that the reason his third marriage and, possibly, his third wife survived was due to his *not* repeating that secret to her. So, these repetitions not only echo and emphasize the narrator's reluctance to know, but they also create a certain expectancy, as Szegedy-Maszák maintains repetition does (Szegedy-Maszák 1983, 39), forecasting events recounted in the penultimate chapter where they acquire added sinister – literally lethal – connotations, as well as highlighting the more general and potential effects of knowledge, of knowing and not knowing, which through repetition becomes one of the novel's themes.



### b) Portents

The effects of forewarning of the repetitions of *saber* and the narrator's desire not to know about his father's past are linked to his own premonitions, which surface on the day of his wedding to Luisa. The repetitions of his presentiments further accentuate an atmosphere of foreboding. Thus, Juan maintains that since his wedding day he began to have 'toda suerte de presentimientos de desastre' (18).<sup>9</sup> The unease intensifies on their honeymoon when one of the places they visit, forecasting the location of the murder, is Havana, where Luisa suddenly falls ill, further unsettling the narrator:

Los presentimientos de desastre que tácitamente me acompañaron desde la ceremonia de bodas iban adquiriendo diferentes formas, y una de ellas fue [...] la amenaza de la enfermedad o la repentina muerte de quien iba a compartir conmigo la vida. (21)

More than the narrator's explicit mention of death and his presentiments, what creates a foreboding atmosphere in this scene is the echo of certain elements introduced in the initial scene of Teresa's suicide. In both there is an emphasis on the brassières of the two women: Teresa takes hers off and when her body is discovered by the father he is described hurriedly covering the brassière lying on the bidet as his daughter's one intact breast – 'maternal y blanco y aún firme' – attracts the guests' attention (11-12), while Luisa's brassière is twisted as she sits up in bed, partially revealing one of her breasts, and then undone by the narrator so as not to pull (27, 33). A towel is also used in both scenes: in the first one, Juana uses one to wipe the tears, water, and sweat from her dead sister's face, subsequently attempting also to wipe off the blood which immediately

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<sup>9</sup> It feels more appropriate to refer to the narrator/protagonist of *Corazón tan blanco* as 'the narrator' rather than to use his name, Juan, partly because he remains nameless until section fifteen of the novel, and also because he is surrounded by a certain air of impersonality due to the fact that he remains somewhat faceless (there are no detailed descriptions of his physical appearance, comparable to the facelessness of Natalia Manur in *El hombre sentimental*). His narrative tone can also be characterized as generally fairly detached.

soaks the towel (12), while the narrator also applies a towel to Luisas's face to wipe off the sweat (33-34). Finally, in both scenes a mirror is present: Teresa commits suicide in front of the bathroom mirror which, as a result, is sprayed with blood, as one of the guests notices in the act of looking at his bloody reflection in the mirror (11-13), whilst, in the Havana hotel, the narrator sees Luisa's awake and alert reflection in the mirror (42). Luisa is already linked to Teresa in that she, too, has just married and her husband is the son of Teresa's spouse at the time. Furthermore, she and Teresa are the only ones to whom Ranz divulges his secret.

The repeated prominence of brassières, breast, towels, sweat, and mirrors further links the two women and scenes, suggesting the possibility of Luisa sharing Teresa's fate. Both scenes also portend the scene of Ranz's murder of his first wife when the sweating Ranz is leaning over his sleeping Cuban wife (who, like Luisa, 'se había metido en la cama como una enferma'), wondering whether he should undo her brassière which seems to be pulling, before murdering her (284-285).

In addition, as the narrator is wiping Luisa's face with a wet towel, he notices her unkempt hair and describes it in parenthesis using a premonitory comparison: 'Algunos cabellos sueltos le atravesaban la frente como si fueran delgadas arrugas venidas desde el futuro a ensombrecerla un instante' (34). This simile not only constitutes an omen of Ranz's murder, but also literally represents the movement of the figure of portending or foreshadowing: something announcing, referring or pertaining to a future moment which casts a shadow over the present. The exact repetition of this phrase on three occasions throughout the entire narrative consolidates its foreboding effect, culminating in its final repetition describing the victim's last moment (250, 265, and 287).

The narrator's own uneasy presentiments continue to haunt him throughout the narration, as the repetitions of the words *malestar* and *malestares* (19, 21, 33, 45, 47, 230, 258), *sensación de desastre* (46), *presentimientos desastrosos* or *de desastre* (137, 199, 230, 258) illustrate. They, too, seem to be announcing a tragedy.

There is another scene in Havana which develops on the outside and in parallel to what occurs inside the hotel room on the evening of Luisa's illness (22-56). The narrator is standing on the balcony looking out onto the street and the people below him when he notices a woman pacing up and down the pavement opposite the hotel, waiting for a date. After observing the woman for a while he is noticed by her and mistaken for her date. She begins to gesticulate and raise her voice angrily at him, whilst walking in the direction of the hotel, eventually realizing her mistake. Then, a man standing on the balcony adjacent to the narrator's – the narrator can only make out his hairy forearms showing below his rolled-up sleeves, and compares them to his own equally hairy ones, noticing that the man is wearing both his wedding ring and his wristwatch on his right hand and arm, unlike himself who sports them on his left, he tells us (30) – calls the woman ('Miriam'), and she joins him in his room where they have an animated encounter, on which both the narrator and Luisa eavesdrop. And what they hear and deduce from their conversation is that the man, Guillermo, is a married Spaniard who has also been seeing Miriam, a Cuban living in Havana, and that Miriam wants his wife dead, threatening to kill herself instead, if Guillermo were not to comply: 'Si no la matas me mato yo. Tendrás una muerta, o ella o yo' (51).

This entire scene stands in premonitory relation to Ranz's story, providing early clues as to what will be revealed as constituting Ranz's secret through its setting (Cuba), the introduction of an extramarital relationship, the theme of instigation (deliberate in

Miriam's case as opposed to Teresa's unintentional incitement), and the explicit mention of death in the two forms relevant to Ranz's account of events (murder and suicide). The scene echoes, in great detail, a short story entitled 'En el viaje de novios', written by Javier Marías at the time of writing *Corazón tan blanco* – only their resolution differs significantly (Marías 1996a, 39-47). There is also a brief scene in *El hombre sentimental* which takes place in the hotel where the narrator/protagonist is staying and where he overhears from the balcony of his hotel room a woman with a Cuban accent arguing with her partner (1986a, 98-99). In some ways, this scene is a precursor of the later ones, a nascent scene or a scene in its infancy. And, in another intertextual echo of the author's own works, the couple's names are the same as those of the Cuban couple resident in London, whom the narrator of *Todas las almas* frequently visits and who are no other than the novelistic equivalents of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and his wife Miriam Gómez. In *Corazón tan blanco* the author permits himself another playful allusion to his friends.<sup>10</sup>

### c) *Mea Cuba*

The scene in Havana introduces a number of elements which are echoed throughout the novel, foreshadowing the secret. So, for example, there are repeated references to Cuba. Firstly, the narrator talks about the Cuban songs his Cuban grandmother taught him (53). Secondly, during an eight week spell at the United Nations in New York after his

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<sup>10</sup> There are also two other obvious intertextual echoes of Marías' own work. A passage in the novel (144) is virtually identical to a passage in *Todas las almas* (Marías 1989a, 147), and the former also repeats a sentence from the latter work which then becomes a leitmotif ('La boca está llena y es la abundancia'), as it is repeated on another two occasions (214, 255). We have also seen how at the beginning of *Todas las almas* the narrator, attempting to distance himself from a past self, maintains that 'el que aquí cuenta lo que vio y le ocurrió no es aquel que lo vio y al que le ocurrió, ni tampoco es su prolongación, ni su sombra, ni su heredero, ni su usurpador' (Marías 1989a, 10). Ranz echoes these words when he reverses their meaning to affirm a connection between his present and former selves: '“El de entonces soy yo todavía, o si no soy él soy su prolongación, o su sombra, o su heredero, o su usurpador”' (270).

honeymoon (the narrator, like his wife, is an interpreter), he accompanies a Spanish couple in his professional capacity to a business dinner during which Cuba happens to be the object of the couple's business dealings; 'preparaban planes para la nueva Cuba', 'hablaban de Cuba con conocimiento de causa' (174). Thirdly, during that spell in New York he stays with a friend of his, a female interpreter permanently resident in the US and in the habit of dating people through agencies, who asks him to identify and follow one of her potential future dates who has not identified himself, another Spaniard on a short stay in New York, about whom the narrator speculates, in Mariás' usual conjectural way and using the present conditional, which makes a potential reality present, echoing the previous reference to Cuba: 'Con esa voz haría negocios y hablaría de Cuba con conocimiento de causa' (189). Fourthly, of Ranz, who has not returned to Cuba since the 1950s, the narrator says the opposite: 'Ranz, cuando hablaba de Cuba ahora, lo hacía sin conocimiento de causa' (224). Finally, in section fourteen, professor Villalobos makes the most premonitory remark yet, presaging what is to be revealed in the following section when he states that he associates a childhood image of someone burning in their bed with Ranz's first wife, an example of the process of association of two ideas producing horror, a process we saw enacted and discussed in the previous novel. Nevertheless, the professor qualifies this association of ideas by introducing the possibility of cinematic mediation: 'Quizá vi esa escena en una película que transcurría en el trópico, me impresionó y asocié las dos ideas, Cuba y el fuego, el fuego y la mujer cubana' (254).<sup>11</sup> Eventually, Cuba turns out to be the main setting of the action making up Ranz's secret as revealed in the penultimate section (257-291). As the secret is

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<sup>11</sup> The idea that with age the increasing uncertainty of the faculty of memory blurs the boundaries of the origins of recollected material is made explicit by Villalobos in his attempts to recollect the past: 'Llega un momento en el que uno confunde lo que ha visto con lo que le han contado, lo que ha presenciado con lo que sabe, lo que le ha ocurrido con lo que ha leído' (253).

unveiled, all the foregoing references to the island take on an added significance in that they subtly announce the scene of the crime, paving the way for what is to come.

*d) Yen yen yen*

Another element introduced in the scene in Havana and subsequently echoed has a similar echoing and premonitory effect. When Miriam tells Guillermo he has to kill his wife, she interrupts a song she has started humming, which she then continues: ‘Mamita mamita, yen yen yen, serpiente me traga, yen yen yen. Mentira mi suegra, yen yen yen, que estamos jugando, yen yen yen, al uso de mi tierra, yen yen yen’ (49-50). A shiver runs down the narrator’s spine when he hears this: he recognizes the rhyme, Cuban in origin, from his own childhood as one recounted by his grandmother, entertaining and frightening him (50). The narrator remembers that it tells the story of a pretty Cuban girl and a rich, handsome foreigner with a promising future – an ‘extraordinario extranjero’ (54; the gemination, the repetition of the first two syllables, also produces an echoing effect of the smallest scale) – who comes to Havana and asks for her hand in marriage. Throughout their wedding night – ‘a lo largo de la larga noche’ (54; this is an instance of antanaclassis) – the daughter’s mother repeatedly hears the above song (first her daughter asking for help, then her son-in-law appeasing her). ‘La posible alarma de aquella madre codiciosa quedaba sin embargo apaciguada por la *reiterada* y estrafularia contestación del yerno que cantaba *una y otra vez*’, recollects the narrator (54-55 – my italics). The repetitions of the epizeuetic lines ‘yen yen yen’ successively alarm and pacify the mother who enters their room in the morning only to find an enormous serpent on the bloody matrimonial bed and no trace of her daughter. This song or rhyme can therefore be said to stand in an allegorical relationship to Ranz’s secret, whilst prefiguring the



tragedy and also echoing the unease felt by the narrator regarding his own marriage: Ranz turns out to be the rich, handsome foreigner with a promising future responsible for the death not only of a Havanan but also of a Spanish woman, not too long after their respective wedding nights, to the consternation of the mothers. The connections are made by the narrator himself when, in the penultimate chapter, echoes of the rhyme are interspersed in Ranz's account (283, 289).

*e) Ashes to ashes*

The scene of the present newlyweds in Havana comes to an end when the narrator, seated on the bed and smoking a cigarette, unintentionally drops some burning ash on to the sheets. Inexplicably, as though under some spell, he does not immediately react to the growing circle of fire: 'Vi cómo empezaba a hacer un agujero orlado de lumbre sobre la sábana. Creo que lo dejé crecer más de lo prudente, porque lo estuve mirando durante unos segundos, cómo crecía y se iba ensanchando el círculo, una mancha a la vez negra y ardiente que se comía la sábana' (56). Similarly, during his stay in New York, he drops some ash on to Berta's bed. However, this time the ash is not burning: 'Llegó apagada y no se comió la sábana' (198). These instances foreshadow Ranz's crime when, after killing his first wife, he sets fire to the bed in exactly the same way. Like his son, he seems to be captivated by the effects of the burning cigarette: 'Dejé el cigarrillo encendido sobre la sábana y lo miré' (288). He then lights more cigarettes, dropping them on the sheets, and his description not only echoes the narrator's own in the above scene, but the latter also inserts in Ranz's account, in parenthesis, an exact repetition of his description at the time: 'Vi cómo empezaban a hacer agujeros orlados de lumbre ("Y lo estuve mirando durante unos segundos", pensé, "cómo crecía y se iba

ensanchando el círculo, una mancha a la vez negra y ardiente que se comía la sábana”), no sé’ (288). (This is a technique which we have already seen Mariás use from *El hombre sentimental* onwards: the narrator listens to another character’s account, reproduced in direct speech in the novel, and intervenes in that account by way of an essentially digressive introduction (because it breaks the continuity of the account) of his own thoughts and comments set off through parentheses or dashes. The account of the other, as was the case in both previous novels, is filtered by the narrator since it is remembered and recounted by him, although the words he uses are his as well as Ranz’s original ones, as he assures the reader, a mediation which does not distort [271].)

The narrator’s momentary hesitation in putting out the fire, during his honeymoon in Havana, prefigures the revelation of his father’s premeditated non-intervention in a fire started in the same way in a flat in Havana forty years previously and also echoes it, since, chronologically, it occurs afterwards.

All the above repetitions produce echoes of anterior narrative moments and elements. They also emphasize and develop meaning because the repetitions create a ‘positive’ redundancy, as repetition facilitates and accelerates the reception of the message (Szegedy-Maszák 1983, 42). These repetitions also foreshadow events to come. They foreshadow in that, depending on the degree of their frequency, they invite us to scrutinize the element repeated and make us wonder what the meaning added through its recurrence may be with regard to the narrative as a whole and to what is yet to come. Repetitions, therefore, encourage us to consider the repeated element structurally, that is to say, more in terms of its function within the narrative (*how*) than in terms of the actual literal content or meaning the element itself encloses (*what*). So, for example, the cigarette ash burning sheets gradually acquires an added signification. Even in its initial

appearance, this detail may draw attention to itself simply by virtue of the fact that the narrator hesitates for a moment and that such a seemingly insignificant occurrence would not merit inclusion unless it were to reveal something more than the narrator's carelessness. Like the seemingly insignificant fragment or element discussed in Chapter III, the small detail introduced becomes enigmatic and eventually acquires significance through its imaginative treatment, in this case its repetition, converting it into a part of the system of closely-knit internal relationships constituting the work. Its repetition starts drawing attention to something other than itself, so to speak. The reader comes to ascribe a secret meaning to the repeated element as it invites interrogation about its relationship with the narrative as a whole and the clues it contains as to what is to come.<sup>12</sup> Repetitions thus invite interrogation in the same way that Hillis Miller says the repetitions in *Lord Jim* or *Wuthering heights* invite interpretation: 'By "materials inviting interpretation" I mean all those passages in the novel which present something evidently meaning more than what is simply present' (1982, 43). All repetitions come to 'evidently mean more', and the more frequent a repetition, the more the reading of the repeated element will shift from what it denotes to how it acquires meaning in terms of its connection to the various narrative moments in which it has been introduced and the signs of future events it offers. The move is from interpretation of literal meaning to reading in terms of the interrelationship with the whole narrative.

This forward and backward movement, the echoing and foreshadowing effects of repetitions, produces a structural correspondence between segments of the work, linking specific moments of the novel. Thus, the echoing and foreshadowing effects of

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, for repetitions to be effective they have to be noticed and remembered by the reader. However, arguably, they do not need to be noticed consciously: repetitions can produce cumulative impressions of vague, unconscious or semi-conscious familiarity in the reader's mind, which, I would suggest, can have effects not too dissimilar to a conscious perception of repetition.

repetitions are instrumental in uniting the novel as a whole. Linking and contributing to the unity of the narration is therefore another effect of repetition, as we shall now see.

## II. Linking and unity

Linguists and psycholinguists recognize that repetition promotes textual cohesion (see Aitchison 1994). In his consideration of forms of repetition in music and literature, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák maintains that form can only be perceived in a work of music or literature if repetition is found in the work, and he adds that the unity of a work 'is based on some form of repetition; that is why we have the impression that great works were written backwards. Texts lacking repetition give the impression of being incidental or improvised' (Szegedy-Maszák 1983, 43).

I think it is precisely for this reason that this work seems to be the result of meticulous design: the unifying effects of repetition make the reader believe that such an extent of unity could only have been achieved with the help of elaborate planning. The underlying supposition seems to be that a work developed errantly could not possibly accomplish the unity binding the novel. Yet *Corazón tan blanco* is proof that a work created digressively and errantly can enjoy unparalleled unity if the digressive elements are bound and formalized through repetitions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Whether repetitions are produced intentionally or unintentionally is a separate, yet fascinating question, which has occupied psycholinguists for some time (see Aitchison 1994). In the case of Mariás, it would be interesting, and probably impossible, to attempt to determine the level of intentionality of repetitions. For example, there are cases, as in the selection of a word echoing another, where one could argue that the choice of a word has been determined not by a conscious decision of the writer, but by the materiality of the word being repeated or echoed, suggesting a link to another word, a process called *covert controlled repetition* or *automatic shadowing*: in *Corazón tan blanco* this is the case of an antimetathesis such as 'la normalidad algo anómala' (34), or isolexisms such as 'extraordinario extranjero' (54) and 'representante tan representativo' (192). In these cases, as was the case of the isolexism '*Plorans ploravit plosivo*' in *El siglo* discussed in Chapter II, the second term seems to have been chosen, or the first term has suggested the second, simply on the grounds of its echoing the first and the consequent combined phonetic effect, not so much because of its actual signification. Of course, as we shall see, such repetitions also reveal something about the character.

Needless to say, one of the consequences of elements echoed throughout the novel is also to link the distinct narrative moments repeated in some form or other and, as we shall see in this section, repetitions link, inviting comparisons and connections, juxtaposing elements, creating motifs, themes, symbols, and rhythmic patterns, and, more generally, uniting the novel as a whole.

#### *a) Death*

One of the more notable clusters of repetitions revolves around death and contributes to its configuration as a theme. There are two types of recurrences of death in the novel: references to specific deaths and thoughts on death of a more general or aphoristic kind. As far as the former are concerned, they determine the circular structure of the novel, linking beginning and end. The novel opens with an inexplicable suicide which introduces a secret and ends with a murder which is the secret and the explanation of the suicide. This narrative circularity corresponds to the state of mind of the narrator as he moves from initial and increasing unease to a dissolution or reduction of the disquieting feelings. 'La narración termina allí donde comienza [...] obteniendo así una circularidad narrativa que corresponde a la situación psicológica del narrador', maintains Alfonso de Toro (1995, 90-91). According to Elide Pittarello: 'Estas muertes violentas y lejanas circunscriben el periplo narrativo del protagonista' (1996, 26). Two deaths, both of a woman to whom Ranz was married, for both of which he is responsible, albeit in very different ways, both of which took place forty years previously, encircle a narrative which, in turn, comprises more abstract references to death, thus internally threading

together the entire narrative by providing a line of continuity from beginning to end. A number of aphorisms are therefore concerned with death.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, as the narrator is waiting beneath the building on the street for Berta's eventual nocturnal encounter with her date to come to an end, for an instant he fears for Berta's life: 'De pronto temí por Berta [...] la gente muere, parece imposible pero la gente muere' (216). This antepiphora is itself repeated again a page and a half later: 'La gente muere, la gente que conocemos muere aunque parezca imposible' (217). Apart from foregrounding death and establishing internal links, the repeated references to death also foreshadow the crime to be revealed in the end. Death in *Corazón tan blanco* becomes a leitmotif, an idea thematized further by added references originating in a quotation from Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, a play which becomes a significant reference point in the novel.

It is first introduced in a meeting between a high-ranking British politician and her Spanish counterpart, in which Juan and Luisa act as interpreters and where they meet for the first time. During that meeting the British politician quotes Lady Macbeth: 'Los dormidos, y los muertos, no son sino como pinturas' (76). This is Lady Macbeth's reply to her husband in an attempt to appease him in Act II Scene 2 (l. 54-55), when, after having murdered Duncan, he tells her he cannot go back to return the daggers to the scene of the crime because he cannot look on what he has done. (The resemblance of sleep to death is a motif in the play and is also echoed in Mariás' novel.) The quotation is then repeated in its original form in English by the narrator on the next page (77).

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<sup>14</sup> These are some examples: 'Pero nadie sabe el orden de los muertos ni el de los vivos, a quién le tocará primero la pena o primero el miedo' (100); 'Las muertes hacen ricos a los que no lo eran ni podrían serlo jamás por sí solos' (112); 'Imaginar evita muchas desgracias, quien anticipa su propia muerte rara vez se mata, quien anticipa la de los otros rara vez asesina, es preferible asesinar y matarse con el pensamiento' (141); 'Besar o matar a alguien son cosas tal vez opuestas, pero contar el beso y contar la muerte asimila y asocia de inmediato ambas cosas, establece una analogía y erige un símbolo' (221).



And, during Ranz's revelation of his secret, the narrator again repeats it by inserting it in parenthesis during Ranz's account of Teresa unwittingly instigating him as they are lying on the bed: 'Los dormidos, y los muertos, no son sino como pinturas, padre' (279). Here, the narrator, not unlike Lady Macbeth with regard to her husband, seems to be trying to pacify his father, although he cannot hear him, by attempting to mitigate the importance of what is said. Finally, the Shakespeare quotation is echoed by Ranz himself a few pages later as he is looking at his first wife who is asleep, just before killing her: 'No era muy distinta de una muerta, no era muy distinta de un cuadro' (285). The quotation introduced almost two hundred pages earlier has come full circle, echoing Shakespeare whilst acquiring a more sinister signification in its final resting place. The significance of death is developed throughout the novel whilst also moulding it into a theme.

#### *b) Humming*

Another element repeated throughout the novel is that of women humming. In the opening scene, the maid, unaware of the precise reasons that the guests and hosts are all congregating in the bathroom, absent-mindedly hums ('canturreó un poco') as she awaits their return to the table (15). Forty years later, on the narrator's honeymoon in Havana, he hears Miriam humming ('canturreaba') the aforementioned song (49), a humming which in turn triggers the narrator's memory as he recalls his own Cuban grandmother humming the same and other songs during his childhood – 'canturreaba canciones sin darse cuenta' – as well as remembering other maids who, during his childhood, would hum unconsciously whilst working (51-56). The narrator then goes on to maintain that all the women of his childhood were united in their humming:

Ese canto indeliberado y flotante debió de ser canturreado en todas las casas del Madrid de mi infancia todas las mañanas a lo largo de muchos años, como un mensaje sin significado que vinculaba a la ciudad entera y la emparentaba y armonizaba [...] Fue canturreado por todas las mujeres de aquellos tiempos que no están muy lejos de estos. (52)

He then enumerates the various women (maids, mothers, grandmothers, widows, spinsters), whilst also explicitly repeating the mention of the humming maid in the opening chapter (52).

But the humming does not stop here – it is mentioned again in connection with Miriam and in the description of a scene from the narrator's childhood suddenly coming back to him: 'Esas escenas insignificantes que regresan fugazmente como si fueran canturreos' (141-142). Furthermore, the narrator also hears Berta humming absent-mindedly on a couple of occasions in New York (210, 237). Following the same structure of repetitions in *Corazón tan blanco*, the humming inevitably reappears in the penultimate chapter, when Ranz tells Luisa how he heard his Cuban wife hum whilst lying on the bed shortly before she was to die (284). Finally, in the last paragraph of the novel the narrator tells us how he sometimes hears Luisa humming in the bathroom (301). The humming unites all the main female characters of the novel, as it united all the female figures inhabiting the narrator's childhood. This rhythmical, insignificant, yet insistent sound is emitted by the women, linking them all and setting them apart from the men, as though they were in possession of a language and a meaning or truth from which the latter remained excluded.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth Christie argues that the humming is an instance of the 'female language', which stands in opposition to the 'male language' in which the narrator's identity is founded; he also 'learns to speak' this 'female language' and to identify himself in terms of it (Christie 1995b, 152).

c) *Looking up, looking down*

Throughout the novel, in another instance of a repetition linking and juxtaposing, a number of scenes consist of a specific situation, namely a man or woman standing on the pavement and being observed from or observing a balcony or window of the building opposite.<sup>16</sup> The first example of this is the scene in Havana in which Miriam is standing on the other side of the street from the hotel in which the narrator is staying and from where he watches her, until she notices him, mistaking him for the person she was waiting for until she discovers her true date on the adjacent hotel balcony. Similarly, on one of the days the narrator is working at home in his study, in the present moment of the narration, an organ grinder and a gypsy woman on the street corner below disturb him and he pays them to move on (103-106). Two thirds into the novel, the narrator juxtaposes two other scenes, whilst also referring to the other two scenes involving the organ grinder and Miriam, thus making the connection between them explicit: on a rainy night, a week after his return to Madrid following his stay in New York, the narrator looks out of his study on to the street below, spotting a figure ‘en la misma esquina en que se pusieron más tarde el organillero viejo y la gitana’, looking up towards Luisa’s and the narrator’s bedroom (201-2). He recognizes the figure as Custardoy:

Pero tardé en reconocérmelo, en reconocerme que bajo el alero y la lluvia reconocía a Custardoy el joven mirando hacia nuestra ventana más íntima, esperando, escrutando, igual que un enamorado, como Miriam un poco o como yo mismo unos días antes, Miriam y yo en otras ciudades más allá del océano, Custardoy aquí, en la esquina de mi casa. (202-3)

This repetitive passage (note, for example, the astute epanaleptic and sylleptic uses of *reconocer*: *reconocérmelo* encompasses both subsequent meanings of the verb, as it

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<sup>16</sup> These instances are related to the voyeurism present in the novel; the narrator as well as a number of other characters often find themselves in situations in which they are spectators (taking some pleasure) in observing others, unbeknown to the latter.

means ‘to admit’ or ‘to acknowledge’ – the only possible meaning of *reconocerme* – with the direct object pronoun in this case referring to an abstract idea, whilst *reconocía* means to recognize) alludes to the narrator also waiting on a street corner, a situation which occurred during his stay in New York, therefore chronologically anterior to the one in Madrid, but introduced in juxtaposition with this scene, foregrounding their similarities. In New York, very late one Saturday night, the narrator also found himself below a building – Berta’s – where he was staying, looking up towards one of the apartment’s windows waiting for her date with the mysterious Bill to come to an end so as to be able to return (205-19). Earlier the same night, Bill, too, had waited on the same street corner for the narrator to leave the apartment. The similarities of the two scenes allow for the connection to be made between them and facilitate the parenthetical insertion of the New York incident into the one set in Madrid. There is one final repetition of this situation: in the penultimate chapter Ranz recounts how, after murdering his first wife and setting fire to the bed, he left the flat and descended to the street corner below, from where he cast another look up (288). The narrator then takes the opportunity to connect Ranz’s action with all the previous ones, by reminding us in parenthesis of the similar position occupied by a succession of characters (288).

Specific, perceptible repetitions are necessary for the narrative in order to create plot, Peter Brooks has argued (1984, 99). Repetitions show us ‘a significant interconnection of events. An event gains meaning by its repetition’ (Brooks 1984, 99). Miriam, the organ grinder, Custardoy, Bill, the narrator, and Ranz are all linked through this situation which repeats itself and the repetition invites a consideration of people’s lives in structural terms, as though they were all at the mercy of an inexplicable and uncanny force, actors in the drama of life, making them occupy a position within a larger

structure beyond their control and destined to repeat itself. The structure seems to determine the repetition, but what the repetitions do is become the vehicle by way of which the structure can become manifest.<sup>17</sup> An isolated incident of someone looking up from a street corner would be significant only in terms of the particularities of the situation. Its repetition makes it meaningful on another level in that it points to an underlying design or order of which the incidents are a manifestation.

*d) A double Bill*

In another instance of repetition linking characters, Bill, the Spaniard whom Berta eventually meets through a dating agency in New York, is linked to Guillermo, adding to the suggestion that they may very well be the same person, when his voice is described using an exact repetition of the description of Guillermo's voice heard in Cuba. 'Su voz era como una sierra', says the narrator of Miriam's lover's voice (42). And, while he watches the tape, recorded by Bill and sent to Berta, in which he does not show his face, he says exactly the same of Bill's voice (176). Interestingly, Ranz's voice is described using the same term but in negative form: 'No como una sierra' (279). This sets Ranz apart from Guillermo and Bill, whilst inviting a comparison between the latter two. The similarities between them are not restricted to the voice: like Guillermo, Bill, who has chosen the shortened English equivalent of the Spanish name as his pseudonym, is not only a Spaniard, but he is also left-handed, wears an identical watch on his right wrist ('negro y de gran tamaño' is the description repeated in the respective passages [30 and 175]), a wedding ring on his right hand, and has strong and hairy arms

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<sup>17</sup> Repetitions themselves become repetitions when what they repeat is recognized as the 'same', as Neil Hertz maintains: 'Repetition becomes "visible" when it is colored by something being repeated, which itself functions like vivid or heightened language, lending a kind of rhetorical consistency to what is otherwise quite literally unspeakable' (Hertz 1985, 102).

(‘brazos fuertes y velludos’, says the narrator of Guillermo’s arms, and ‘brazos velludos y fuertes’ of Bill’s [31 and 175]). Also, both remind the narrator of the Scottish actor Sean Connery, a likeness emphasized through intertextual repetition (175, 185-186, 189, 299).

#### e) *Matrimony*

*Corazón tan blanco*, like any novel, contains a number of motifs and themes, like death, which contribute to linking it as a whole, developing meanings, and reinforcing its dramatization. As such, their existence depends on repetition. Alongside the aforementioned death, matrimony is perhaps the main theme of the novel.<sup>18</sup> The origins of the narrative itself lie in the narrator’s presentiments brought about by his marriage to Luisa, the *cambio de estado* he often refers to being the one affecting his marital status. In the chapter following the inexplicable suicide after a honeymoon, the narrator explains that his desire to know or not to know about this suicide was occasioned by this change in marital status, and he further explores the import of matrimony explicitly, whilst effecting the link between matrimony, illness, and presentiments through the self-conscious use of the verb *contraer*:

La verdad es que si en tiempos recientes he querido saber lo que sucedió hace mucho ha sido justamente a causa de mi matrimonio (pero más bien no he querido, y lo he sabido). Desde que lo contraje (y es un verbo en desuso, pero muy gráfico y útil) empecé a tener toda suerte de presentimientos de desastre, de forma parecida a como cuando se contrae una enfermedad, de las que jamás se

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<sup>18</sup> It is worth recalling that the theme of matrimony had already appeared in Marías’ work as early as *Travesía del horizonte* in the form of an aphorism: ‘Imagino que [la relación entre Bayham y la señorita Bonington] respondía a esa clase de situaciones, sumamente penosas de contemplar y que por lo general llevan a una despersonalización de una de las dos partes, que tanto se dan entre las jóvenes parejas próximas a contraer matrimonio: el más absoluto servilismo (o buen conformar) por un lado – el del enamorado verdadero [...] – y el capricho inconsecuente y doblemente pernicioso por el hecho de saberse de antemano complacido por otro – el del que simplemente se deja querer: en la mayoría de los casos, en contra de lo que podría suponerse, el menos inteligente –’ (Marías 1988, 111).



sabe con certidumbre cuándo uno podrá curarse. La frase hecha *cambiar de estado*, que normalmente se emplea a la ligera y por ello quiere decir muy poco, es la que me parece más adecuada y precisa en mi caso, y le confiero gravedad, en contra de la costumbre. Del mismo modo que una enfermedad cambia tanto nuestro estado como para obligarnos a veces a interrumpirlo todo y guardar cama durante días incalculables y a ver el mundo ya sólo desde nuestra almohada, mi matrimonio vino a suspender mis hábitos y aun mis convicciones, y, lo que es más decisivo, también mi apreciación del mundo. (17-18)

This change wrought upon the narrator leads him to experience matrimony as a loss and as an end (18-19). Matrimony becomes for the narrator a loss, amongst other things, of the possibility of choice and privacy (19-20) and a loss of what he calls the abstract future (*futuro abstracto*):

Me era [...] totalmente imposible pensar en el futuro, que es uno de los mayores placeres concebibles para cualquier persona, si no la diaria salvación de todos: pensar vagamente, errar con el pensamiento puesto en lo que ha de venir o puede venir, preguntarse sin demasiada concreción ni interés por lo que será de nosotros mañana mismo o dentro de cinco años, por lo que no prevemos. Ya en el viaje de bodas era como si se hubiera perdido y no hubiera futuro abstracto, que es el que importa porque el presente no puede teñirlo ni asimilarlo. (19-20)

This *futuro abstracto* is a potential, possible, conjectural or imagined future, a freedom of the imagination, the liberty to speculate about what is to come with its realization still remaining a possibility, something the narrator feels is no longer possible as his future seems much more concrete; he is married and will be for the foreseeable future at least, and this excludes other possibilities. It also mirrors the author's own interest in reading and writing, his lack of interest in the known and his desire to err, to digress, to explore the potential of things through the imagination. The *futuro abstracto* becomes a motif by being repeatedly used throughout the novel in connection not only with the narrator's present situation (92, 293), but also with reference to his adolescent years (107, 108), in the form of aphorisms (200, 226, 299), and, of course, interspersed by the narrator in Ranz's account to explain Teresa's despair: "Era como si se hubiera perdido y no hubiera futuro abstracto", pensé, "que es el que importa porque el presente

no puede teñirlo ni asimilarlo” (269). Finally, we are told by the narrator that, the moment Ranz’s first wife was being murdered, she lost both her concrete and abstract future (287).

The more general theme of matrimony is also configured in the narration through frequent and explicit references in the form of aphorisms (29, 49, 78, 84-85, 90-91, 145-148). But, like the motif of the abstract future, there are also a number of other images, motifs and themes revolving around or related to matrimony which are developed through repetitions.

#### *f) Pillow talk*

The recurrent references to the pillow is one such motif. Initially the pillow is associated with periods of illness, first during childhood and then adulthood, as the place from which one is obliged passively to observe the world (18, 21, 51, 53). Gradually it also becomes a symbol of matrimony, the locus where no secrets between the spouses exist because it is impossible not to talk and share everything in the exclusive ‘sphere’ of the pillow (84, 145-147, 157, 201, 216, 229, 258, 260):

La fuerza del territorio que delimita la almohada es tanta que excluye de su seno cuanto no está en ella, y es un territorio que por su propia naturaleza no permite que nada esté en ella excepto los cónyuges, o los amantes, que en cierto sentido *se quedan solos* y por eso se hablan y nada callan, involuntariamente. (147)

By extension, this is precisely the reason why matrimony is defined as a narrative institution: ‘Es más bien que estar junto a alguien consiste en buena medida en pensar en voz alta, esto es, en pensarlo todo dos veces en lugar de una, una con el pensamiento y otra con el relato, el matrimonio es una institución narrativa’ (146). During the narrator’s stay in New York, the pillow’s territory extends to include solitary existences, single people’s lives such as Berta’s and Bill’s (164, 206, 234, 236). And then, in Ranz’s

account in the penultimate chapter, the pillow, like all the other elements repeated in the novel, becomes associated with his dark secret: first, Ranz recounts how Teresa, after being told his secret, would bury her head and her despair in her pillow, crying incessantly, lamenting the loss of her abstract future (268), and then, the narrator includes the pillow in a conjectural murder scene – similar to the ones I discussed in the previous two chapters – (Ranz is not explicit about how he killed his first wife) as a potential murder weapon (285) and as a resting place for the victim's head as she is being strangled (286). The final mention in the last chapter returns the pillow to the relative quiescence of the matrimonial space (295).

#### *g) Secrets and lies*

The secret itself, its nature and its effects, becomes another theme of the novel as was also the case in *Travesía del horizonte* and in *El siglo*, where Casaldáliga's discovery of his father's secret regarding his wife virtually changed his life.<sup>19</sup> In *Todas las almas*, Marías' evident preoccupation with the secret in his following novel is prefigured when the narrator, reflecting on the inevitability of his transmitting something he has been told by Toby Rylands, exclaims:

Pero ningún secreto puede ni debe ser guardado siempre para todo el mundo, sino que está obligado a encontrar al menos un destinatario una vez en la vida, una vez en la vida de ese secreto. Por eso algunas personas reaparecen. Por eso nos condenamos siempre por lo que decimos. O por lo que nos dicen. (Marías 1989a, 166-167)<sup>20</sup>

This could very well have been one of the narrator's reflections in *Corazón tan blanco* where the secret plays a pivotal role, as becomes evident not only when the suicide

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<sup>19</sup> The importance of the secret – both for the plot and structurally – reflects the significance of the secrets in *Travesía del horizonte* which I examined in Chapter I.

<sup>20</sup> The narrator is here referring to something divulged to him by Toby Rylands and in another intertextual echo of *Todas las almas*, there is a fleeting reference to Toby Rylands in *Corazón tan blanco* (97).

introduces the existence of a secret, but when, on the narrator's wedding day, Ranz affirms that 'el mundo está lleno de sorpresas, también de secretos' (97), and then solemnly offers his son a single and puzzling piece of advice with regard to his wife: 'Cuando tengas secretos o si ya los tienes, no se los cuentes' (101). This single phrase is repeated by the narrator on a number of occasions, thus drawing the reader's attention to it and emphasizing its importance without yielding its meaning (216-217, 267, 276). Only after Ranz's revelation of his own terrible secret does the significance of this piece of advice become apparent to both the narrator and the reader: it is the revelation of his secret to his second wife, Teresa, as they lie in bed on their honeymoon in the space of the matrimonial pillow where secrets cannot be kept, which leads her to commit suicide (274). 'Se mató por algo que yo le conté', Ranz admits to Luisa (265). From then on, Ranz jealously guards his secret in order to lead a fulfilling existence because he has become aware of its potential consequences once revealed – for example, it is probably due to the fact that his third and last wife does not ask him about it, that she prefers not to know the secret, that she does not die a premature death – as he acknowledges to Luisa:

Todo eso ha sido posible porque nadie supo nada, sólo Teresa. Lo que hice fue hecho, pero la gran diferencia para lo que viene luego no es haberlo o no haberlo hecho, sino que fuera ignorado por todos. Que fuera un secreto. (281)

This explanation of the necessity of Ranz's secret is forecast by the narrator when he tries to explain to Luisa his reluctance to know his father's secret: 'No contarle es borrarlo un poco, olvidarlo un poco, negarlo, no contar su historia puede ser un pequeño favor que hacen al mundo' (150). Later on he concludes that 'el secreto que no se transmite no hace daño a nadie' (216).

#### *h) The effects of knowledge*

The consequences of Ranz's act, other than for his victim, were dependent on knowledge of the deed. In this case knowledge means death, and lack of knowledge, the possibility to live life as though the murder had not occurred. Linked to the theme of the secret is that of the effects of knowledge, and what Marías is clearly suggesting in the novel is that life is determined more by the knowledge or lack of knowledge of what has occurred than by the actual occurrences alone which, if not witnessed and recounted, have limited, if any, consequences and effects; 'la vida o los venideros años no dependen de lo que se hace, sino de lo que se sabe de uno, de lo que se sabe que ha hecho y de lo que no se sabe porque no hubo testigos y se ha callado', reflects the narrator (217). During his confession, his father uncannily echoes his son's thought and expands on it (281). The narrator himself is already very wary of the effects of knowledge, as is reflected in his initial unwillingness to know and his eventual but passive acceptance of uncovering the secret. And he only finds out indirectly, as he overhears and then eavesdrops on Ranz recounting his story to Luisa, the narrator's mediator between the secret and its reception, as though he feared direct contact with that knowledge.

Orpheus looks back and loses Eurydice as he leads her out of the underworld. Lot's wife looks back at her homeland and turns into a pillar of salt. Oedipus looks back into the past in order to uncover the murderer and is blinded, as he discovers that it is he who has committed the crime. The narrator, on the other hand, seems to be well-read, very aware of the myths surrounding the backward glance, looking back into the past. Hence, in an essentially superstitious move, he chooses an indirect method of coming

into contact with the past, to avoid or mitigate potential disaster arising out of this backward glance.

The theme of the effects of knowledge is also explored in the novel with the help of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, initially introduced in section four and then echoed throughout in relation to a number of themes, images, and motifs. Section five is entirely dedicated to a brief discussion of certain of the implications of the play, in particular of Act II, scene 2, introducing a number of phrases, ideas and images which are then consistently repeated throughout the narrative and contribute to the development of themes and motifs. One of those is the effect of knowledge of the murder on Lady Macbeth. After having instigated her husband to commit the murder of Duncan, Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth in Act II, scene 2 (1.1): 'I have done the deed'. The narrator of *Corazón tan blanco* maintains that what makes Lady Macbeth an accomplice to the murder is not so much that she has instigated it, but that she knows of it: 'Ella oye la confesión de ese acto o hecho o hazaña, y lo que la hace verdadera cómplice no es haberlo instigado [...] sino saber de ese acto y de su cumplimiento' (80). The word 'deed' and its plural are repeated seventeen times in the play and in the novel the Shakespeare quotation 'I have done the deed' and its Spanish translation, the polyptoton 'he hecho el hecho', are repeated by Ranz and the narrator in the penultimate chapter (274).

#### *i) Instigation*

The narrator also introduces the idea of instigation through the references to *Macbeth*, and instigation, a theme in Shakespeare's play, also becomes a motif in Mariás' novel



through its repetition.<sup>21</sup> ‘Ahora que sé que esa cita venía de *Macbeth*’, explains the narrator at the beginning of the fifth section, ‘no puedo evitar darme cuenta (o quizá es recordar) de que también está a nuestra espalda quien nos instiga, también ese nos susurra al oído sin que lo veamos acaso’ (79); ‘una instigación no es nada más que palabras’, he infers (81). As such, what is dangerous, is listening to the words that instigate because one is defenceless: ‘Escuchar es lo más peligroso, es saber, es estar enterado y estar al tanto, los oídos carecen de párpados que puedan cerrarse instintivamente a lo pronunciado’ (80). The significance of this statement, which turns out to prefigure events, is attested when it is repeated again before and during Ranz’s confession (217, 275). The instigator is not in the same position as the one who has been incited to commit a crime because the former knows ‘que no ha hecho nada, incluso si ha obligado con su lengua al oído, con su pecho a la espalda, con la respiración agitada, son su mano en el hombro y el incomprensible susurro que nos persuade’ (81-82). The motif of instigation, the fact that people are made to commit certain deeds by others – ‘todo el mundo obliga a todo el mundo’ (75) – linked with the images of the tongue in the ear, someone behind one’s back, and the hand on the shoulder, which stand in metonymic relationship to instigation, is developed throughout the novel by way of various forms of repetitions of these elements (80, 83, 92, 195, 236, 268, 270, 275).<sup>22</sup> For example, even before the word is explicitly introduced and the concept discussed, Miriam tries to incite Guillermo to kill his wife (49-51). These repetitions all

<sup>21</sup> In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth’s instigation of her husband to murder is particularly prevalent in Act I, scene 5 when she tells him, amongst other things: ‘Hie thee hither, / That I may pour spirits in thine ear, / And chastise with the valour of my tongue all that impedes thee from the golden round’ (l. 24-27). In Act I, scene 7 she convinces him to do the deed.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Tongue’, in its relation to language, speech, and its importance for man as an individual and a social being is a recurring image in many of Shakespeare’s plays (Ewbank 1986, 58-59). For example, the word ‘tongue’ and its plural are also repeated eleven times in *Macbeth*, where, as in Marías’ work, the word, used metaphorically in all instances, contributes to the configuration of themes, like instigation, suggested by the action of the play.

foreshadow Teresa's unintentional instigation which leads to two deaths: the murder of Ranz's first wife and, when she discovers the crime and her own involvement, her suicide. Needless to say, the description of Teresa's involuntary instigation in the penultimate chapter repeats not only these images but also whole sentences (278-280).

j) *Macbeth*

As we have seen, Shakespeare's play contributes to the configuration of a number of the novel's themes, motifs, and images, as well as suggesting the title: 'My hands are of your colour; but I shame / To wear a heart so white', is what Lady Macbeth tells her husband after smearing blood on Duncan's guards to incriminate them (II, 2, l. 64-65), as Mariás' narrator tells us. The narrator then goes on to discuss the meaning of the word 'white', whether it signifies innocence or cowardice, a passage repeated by the narrator as Ranz is talking about Teresa's involuntary instigation in the penultimate chapter, thus emphasizing the link between Lady Macbeth and Teresa, as well as paraphrased in the last chapter (80-82, 280, 294). The references to *Macbeth*, the fact that the narrator borrows and reworks lines, motifs, themes, and even images from Shakespeare's play, inevitably invites a more general comparison between the two works.

I would venture to say that Mariás uses repetition in a similar way to Shakespeare. D. R. Elloway says of the play: 'The way in which [Macbeth's] crime spreads through and corrupts his reign is reflected in the spreading pattern of imagery in the play, and in the way his earlier words echo through the later scenes and gradually reveal their meaning' (1971, 26). Furthermore, not only does the spreading pattern of imagery and echoes reflect the corruption effected by the crime in *Macbeth*, but they also are the principal, albeit surreptitious, way in which this corruption becomes

manifest. As Inga-Stina Ewbank says: 'The repetitive verbal patterns define and confirm the thematic structure of the action' (1986, 59).

Exactly the same is true of Mariás' novel, as the discussion of repetitions has shown: the themes, motifs, and images are borne out through repetition. Repetitions, as we have seen, produce echoes, foreshadow what is to come, emphasize and develop meanings of certain elements, link characters, scenes, concepts, ideas, and images creating themes and motifs and highlighting the interconnectedness of events and uniting the narrative as a whole.

### *III. Rhythmic association*

By doing so, repetitions produce 'clusters' of bound textual elements. These range from simple words such as *sierra* to themes such as instigation, which in turn are also enriched and developed by a variety of single images (the tongue in the ear, the hand on the shoulder, etc.). These 'clusters' become usable and re-usable by the narrative. As Peter Brooks suggests, the 'energy' of a text 'can become usable by plot only when it has been bound or formalized' (1984, 101). Repetition is what achieves this binding:

Repetition in all its literary manifestations may in fact work as a 'binding,' a binding of textual energies that allows them to be mastered by putting them into serviceable form, usable 'bundles' within the energetic economy of the narrative. Serviceable form must, I think, mean perceptible form. (Brooks 1984, 101)

Some of the repetitions in the penultimate chapter were already connected to each other prior to Ranz's revelation: elements relating to the theme of matrimony such as the pillow, the idea of the loss of an abstract future, or the Cuban rhyme and other elements associated with the theme of the effects of knowledge, such as the narrator's desire not to know, the question of secrets, or even death itself. Most remained unrelated before the penultimate chapter: the repeated image of burning ash falling onto the bed

seemed completely unrelated to anything else in the novel, as did the repeated scenes of people standing under balconies. As we have seen, this is where some repetitions, which have already been developing and expanding in terms of their meanings throughout the novel, are given an added and final turn by acquiring a more deep-rooted significance, and where a lot of elements which are repeated only once, as is the case of the quotation of Lady Macbeth regarding 'a heart so white', reveal their meaning as far as the narrative is concerned. The penultimate chapter reiterates all the significant elements previously repeated with greater or lesser frequency or the ones previously mentioned only once in the context of Ranz's secret. All the elements, developed to different degrees up to that point, become associated with the secret and, therefore, are also linked to each other by virtue of the fact of coming to form part of a single story or account. We saw this same process of association in operation in the penultimate chapter of *Todas las almas*.<sup>23</sup>

The penultimate chapter of *Corazón tan blanco* is even more exemplary of this mastery of textual energies, where a number of previously unrelated 'clusters' or 'bundles' formed by repetition, come to be interconnected, forming part of a whole, as they are associated with Ranz's secret through the narrator's parenthetical insertions in Ranz's confession over twenty-six pages (265-291). It reveals 'the big picture' or, literally and metaphorically, 'the whole story'. The 'clusters', separate interjections interspersed by the narrator into Ranz's account reported in direct speech, are also visually distinct entities in a literally serviceable and perceptible form, as they come enclosed in the shape of parentheses introduced into the father's narrative.

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<sup>23</sup> The final chapter of *El hombre sentimental* also bears a resemblance to these chapters in the narrator's imaginative reconstruction of a scene not witnessed, the recounting of a death, and the parenthetical insertions of material introduced earlier.

A parallel that sheds further light on the effects of repetition in Mariás' novel, especially with regard to the aforementioned symbolic or thematic fabric, can also be established: Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, through his use of repetition (Proust 1955-1956). In his book entitled *Rhythm in the novel*, E. K. Brown explains how Marcel Proust's publisher had asked the author to leave out a scene he considered unnecessary (Brown 1978, 36). Proust explained that, although it was not pertinent to the first part of the novel, it was essential to the structure of the whole. The scene revolves around an organist and music teacher called Vinteuil who, amongst other things, composes music and becomes a horrified witness to his daughter's homosexuality. One hundred pages after the first mention of Vinteuil, Swann hears a sonata containing a little phrase which touches him profoundly and turns out to be Vinteuil's. One hundred pages after this repeated reference to Vinteuil and his composition, the sonata is heard again and, according to Brown, serves to highlight Swann's inability to pursue a train of thought, in opposition to Marcel, whose appreciation of the sonata is more profound due to knowing of the crucial circumstance in Vinteuil's life, his daughter's 'inversion'. 'Marcel's approach to Vinteuil's music is clearer for the biographical knowledge', argues Brown, 'and since inversion becomes increasingly the sinister, horrifying element in the novel, what Vinteuil wrote seems to present an oblique and rewarding commentary difficult to reduce to words, but perhaps all the more moving' (Brown 1978, 38).

Having been associated with Vinteuil's own life, the piece of music attains an additional dimension. Later in the novel, in Part VI, Marcel comes across a septet in which he re-discovers the little phrase. Comments Brown:

In the final movement, as Marcel's reveries evoke a stormy sunset, he attends to a phrase which had already figured in the sonata, but which had not acquired for

him, in all the years he had known that work, the value he had perceived at once in the little phrase so cherished by Swann. In its new setting the long-neglected phrase becomes overwhelming. (1978, 39)

Ironically, the septet had been saved after Vinteuil's death, by his daughter's lesbian friend. For Brown, Vinteuil's composition becomes what he calls an 'expanding symbol' and he argues that only if a symbol 'is given a surplus of meaning, can it continue to live the length of the novel' (1978, 46). The expanding symbol is accorded 'depth' by acquiring new significations with each repetition. It is not unlike the fertile motif or fragment discussed in Chapter III, which is incomplete and for its justification points to further development in the future, thus potentially containing the key to the emerging total structure. Brown maintains that the expanding symbol is particularly useful when the idea or feeling which the novelist seeks to render is particularly subtle or elusive, when there is doubt, insecurity of conviction, or uncertainty surrounding the element to be communicated. 'To a writer who is not so confident that life is perfectly intelligible, and who is impelled to render the part of life that eludes his clear and convinced understanding, the symbol, fixed or expanding, is a chief resource', he emphasizes (Brown 1978, 56).<sup>24</sup>

Javier Marías is a writer surrounded by such uncertainty, attested, not least, by his errant writing process and his difficulty in articulating to Benet what his novel was about as he was writing it. The significance the early reference to Vinteuil and his music acquires later on in Proust's narrative is structurally comparable to the significance of all the elements repeated in the penultimate chapter of *Corazón tan blanco*. In their new setting, these repeated elements, like Vinteuil's composition, become forcefully

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<sup>24</sup> Painter has traced the changing places and forms in which the Septet appears during the process of creation of Proust's novel, mirroring Proust's growing awareness of the piece's function as 'a miraculous harbinger' (Painter 1965, 232-250).



significant. What these repetitions have in common with Proust's is the progressively deepening disclosure of meaning produced by what Brown calls

the slow uneven way in which it [the symbol] accretes meaning from the succession of contexts in which it occurs; by the mysterious life of its own it takes on and supports; by the part of its meaning that even on the last page of the novel it appears still to withhold (1978, 57)

For example, every time the pillow re-emerges in Marías' narrative, it brings with it its previous meaning as well as becoming associated with the situation in which it resurfaces, which is always different from the previous one. We have already seen how through its appearance in a number of contexts the pillow is first associated with periods of illness, during childhood and then adulthood, as the place from which one is obliged passively to observe the world. Then it also becomes a symbol of matrimony, the locus where no secrets between the spouses exist. After this the pillow also becomes associated with solitary existences. Finally, in Ranz's account in the penultimate chapter, the pillow becomes associated with his dark secret, first, as the place where Teresa, after being told Ranz's initial secret, repeatedly buries her head and her despair, crying incessantly, and then it is included in a conjectural murder scene as a potential murder weapon and as a resting place for the victim's head as she is being strangled.

We have already looked at a host of other repeated elements, not necessarily symbols, but still in some way representative of or linked to something other than themselves, which undergo a similar journey, such as Cuba, or words, phrases, thoughts, or entire images and scenes. All these repetitions grow like Proust's phrase and like the latter, they internally stitch the narrative together, contributing thus to its unity of form (Forster 1974, 148). This 'internal stitching' is effected by what both Forster and Brown call the rhythmical pattern of repetition which imposes a unifying order (Forster 1974, 148; Brown 1978, 28). Repetition becomes rhythmical because, as is the case in Marías'

novel, it is dependent on development and variation, instead of forming part of a monotonous and static construct. The meaning of the repetitions in the novel, governed by a regularity and frequency, constantly develops and evolves, culminating in the penultimate chapter. Crucially, Forster adds that this type of rhythmical repetition cannot be achieved through premeditation:

I doubt that it can be achieved by the writers who plan their books beforehand, it has to depend on a local impulse when the right interval is reached. But the effect can be exquisite, it can be obtained without mutilating the characters, and it lessens our need of an external form. (1974, 148)

Thus, this process of repetition is another instance of the workings of the creative imagination as described in Chapter III. *Corazón tan blanco* is effective in this respect precisely because of Mariás' errant writing process, his uncertain approach, and his imagination, dispensing with advance planning. His verbal, thematic, and narrative repetitions internally weave the narrative fabric together, strengthening its unity and giving it force. They order chaos, as Masoliver Ródenas puts it (1992, 23). But their rhythmically evolving nature, the fact that they never remain static in their meaning, also bears witness to Mariás' knowledge that 'beyond the verge of what he can express, there is an area which can be glimpsed, never surveyed' (Brown 1978, 59).

#### *IV. Temporal movement*

The recurrent insistence of repetitions foreshadows what is to come, prefiguring future elements, pointing to the textual future. Evidently, part of the reason repetitions create a unifying order is that, as well as pointing forward, they involve a return to previous textual moments, thus linking textual past and present. Repetitions take us back in the text, as well as bearing witness to 'the necessary temporal movement of the narrative, its incapacity to maintain a static position', since they are dependent on the passage of time

for their existence (Naddaff 1991, 90). As Peter Brooks says, they ‘allow the ear, the eye, the mind, to make connections, conscious or unconscious, between different textual moments, to see past and present as related’ (Brooks 1984, 99).

This is very true of *Corazón tan blanco*: all the repetitions refer us back to previous textual moments, inviting the reader to see the interconnectedness of the textual past and present. This is the process through which the secret is gradually unveiled, when the textual present, the relation of Ranz’s secret, is shown to be reliant on the textual past through the reappearance of elements such as, amongst others, matrimony, Cuba, instigation, cigarette ash burning sheets, the pillow, death, and the effects of knowledge, which have consistently been repeated throughout the narrative and contribute to the configuration of the textual present. What is related in the narrative present of the penultimate chapter are, however, events which took place forty years previously. Past events become instrumental in solving the mystery of the suicide, satisfying Luisa’s increasing curiosity, and dispelling the narrator’s intensifying premonitions, apart from accounting for the narrator’s existence itself, as he would not have been born had his father not murdered his first wife and thereby driven his second to suicide before marrying her sister, who thus became the narrator’s mother.

Therefore, not only are textual past and present linked, but also the story’s chronological past and present. Past events are shown to determine the present: events which took place forty years prior to the beginning of the present narrated sequence of events are gradually unveiled and, like the hair on Luisa’s brow, cast a shadow over the present. Repetitions effect the interconnection both of textual as well as chronological

past and present. As Helmuth Karasek puts it, the past is the crime that shapes the existence, the thinking, the feeling, and the acts of the present.<sup>25</sup>

In as far as repetitions involve a return to the text, they re-introduce material already used. Thus, the text feeds on itself. In a discussion of Juan Benet's short story, 'Numa, una leyenda', Frédéric Bravo explains that, in great part, Benet's fiction is less a diachronic progression than a series of synchronic segments connected through digressions which safeguard the transition from one point of the fictional chain to the other. Rather than diegetic amplification there is digressive amplification of the narrative (Bravo 1994, 37-38). In Benet, the story becomes subordinated to digressions which construct it, because it is the digressions which establish the connections in the narrative (Bravo 1994). Benet's plot or storyline emerges rather episodically through a narrative 'zigzag' and every immobilized moment of the story is made to yield its full narrative potential through an exhaustive treatment of even the most insignificant details (Bravo 1994, 38). Bravo argues that Benet's fiction is characterized by a notable diegetical atrophy, because, as a narrator, Benet, through a variety of repetitions, returns to earlier parts of the text itself to provide him with new openings rather than introducing new fictional situations to contribute to the progression of the narrative (1994, 40). Benet's text thus feeds on itself:

Le narrateur va chercher de nouvelles ouvertures [...] dans l'écriture elle-même qui, *revenant sur ses propres traces*, va puiser dans le texte lui-même la matière susceptible de fournir de nouveaux développements. Tout se passe en effet comme si, une fois cette matière éteinte, *le texte devenait, par rétroalimentation, le moteur même de la narration*, le narrateur prélevant sur son propre discours des séquences qui, réutilisées ou, plus exactement, retravaillées puis réinjectées dans le discours, permettront de réenclencher le processus narratif. Le texte se

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<sup>25</sup> 'Vergangenheit als das Verbrechen, das die Existenz, das Denken, Fühlen und Handeln der Gegenwart prägt' (Karasek 1996, 195).

nourissant de lui-même, c'est en effet une longue suite de rebondissements digressifs qui tissent, suivant une progression exponentielle, la trame du récit. Le texte de Benet se construit ainsi non par amplification diégétique, mais par *amplification digressive* de certaines périodes déjà actualisées dans le récit. Phagocytées par l'écriture, ce sont ces phrases qui, déclinées comme des *variations sur les mêmes thèmes* et promues à l'intérieur du texte à une fonction générative analogue à celle exercée par le titre d'un ouvrage ou par l'incipit d'un roman, permettent de relancer la machine narrative. (Bravo 1994, 38 – my italics)

The narrator retraces his own steps, looking for the text itself to furnish him with what is needed to develop the narrative. Bravo calls this process 'textual retroalimentation' which entails the text itself becoming the driving force of the narration, providing variations on the same themes. Bravo would have been more precise, I think, had he talked about repetitive amplification, because initial digressions gradually become repeated, and it is precisely their repetition, as he goes on to show, which configure the narrative.

To a lesser extent, the same is the case with Mariás' fictions. Like many of Benet's novels, *Corazón tan blanco* is, to a certain extent, also a fiction reliant on a number of 'static' sequences exploited *autophagically*, to use Bravo's terminology. It consists of a series of primary scenes (the suicide, the honeymoon scene in Havana, the scene of the narrator and Luisa working as interpreters when they meet for the first time, the scenes of people under balconies, two scenes in New York, the scene in the narrator's flat in the penultimate chapter, and the one reconstructed during this, the murder scene) which become interrelated to each other not merely because of the first person narrator, but through repetitions of elements. These scenes are scrutinized by the narrator, who highlights certain aspects and extracts from them or, more accurately, weaves, with some of the elements introduced in these, a narrative, often through an exhaustive treatment of even the most seemingly insignificant details (like a brassière, a song hummed, or a minor reference to *Macbeth*). Unlike Bravo, I refer to such details as

*seemingly* insignificant because their repetition makes them significant and pertinent to the narrative as a whole. Therefore, potentially, there are no insignificant details in any of Marías' novels, and certainly not in his sixth one. Hence, for this very reason, I would argue that no single element in this novel is gratuitous.<sup>26</sup>

The emphasis in the narrative is on the narrator's remembrances, which are of a static character, because, as Gérard Genette puts it, memory reduces diachrony to synchrony and events to scenes (Genette 1972, 179). As Genette explains, memory emancipates the narrator with regard to the order of the narrated events, allowing him to construct freely his own temporal sequence (Genette 1972, 179). Benet takes this freedom to construct narratives such as *Volverás a Región* and *Una meditación*, in which the action never unfolds linearly or progressively, being, instead, subject to the narrator's erratic mnemonic activity: for example, in the first novel we are given false information by the narrator and, in the second, he omits facts which the reader can only guess, as well as subjecting the action to a discontinuous and partial development. (In both these novels the constant confrontation between remembering and forgetting is also thematized, as well as being enacted on the level of Benet's sentences, which are of such a length that the capacity of the reader's syntactical memory is often exhausted, making it impossible to remember earlier parts of the sentence, thus obliging the reader to return to the beginning of a sentence.)

In *Corazón tan blanco*, although never to such an extent, the narrator's storytelling is also freed from a strictly chronological linking of the scenes in the order of their actual occurrence. Rather, the scenes are linked through repetitive patterns. For example, not only does the relation of the scenes pertaining to a distant past not obey a

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<sup>26</sup> I would, therefore, have to disagree with Ruth Christie who speaks of the 'occasional gratuitousness' of some of the elements in the novel (Christie 1998, 90).



chronological order, neither does the introduction of the scene of the first encounter between the narrator and Luisa which follows that of their wedding, nor the final scene of the narrator's stay in New York, interpolated after his return to Madrid. The temporal sequence of the narration obeys an order determined by the narrator's memory, with the interconnection of the scenes effected by way of repetitions. Repetition is governed by memory, as the narrator of *Una meditación* tells us: 'La memoria, la facultad que rige, controla y garantiza la repetición' (Benet 1990, 264). The difference between Marías and Benet is that in the work of the latter, the repetitions virtually suspend the action and work towards the suspension of the resolution of the intrigue, creating what Bravo calls '*l'effet déceptif de l'attente elle-même, l'écriture refusant d'apporter une quelconque résolution au conflit*' (Bravo 1994, 40). In that of the former they still contribute to narrative suspense, although they do slow down the progressive movement of the narrative, dilating time, as we shall see in a moment.

Thus, on the one hand, the narrative contains a number of static scenes (in terms of action), creating a synchronic sensation, like that of a painting. The sensation of synchrony is further accentuated by the repetitions themselves, which, by recalling a previous textual moment, or more than one, compress one or more temporally anterior moments into one, superimposing temporally distinct narrative moments, thus creating a simultaneity of perception. On the other hand, repetitions, which, like music, are produced through the passage of time, emphasize the diachronic movement of narrative and also counter and negate the illusion of synchrony, because even those scenes are created by language and thus developed through a temporal movement, through a succession of words and of moments.

In his discussion of Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues* and, in particular the section that deals with music, Paul de Man, refuting Derrida's claims regarding Rousseau, maintains that Rousseau's argument is that music, unlike painting, cannot remain static and that it steadily has to repeat itself, a movement determined by the nature of sign as signifier and by the nature of music as language (de Man 1983, 129). The musical signs are unable to coincide, de Man explains, because music 'is the diachronic version of the pattern of non-coincidence within the moment' (1983, 129). De Man argues that 'pseudo-synchronic' structures such as painting or other mimetic art mislead one into believing in a stability of meaning that does not exist because they create a false illusion of presence through the deceptive synchronism of visual perception (de Man 1983, 129-132). Mariás' novel, because it is a narrative dominated by the repetitive mode, foregrounds this diachronic nature of narrative language and is therefore also not a mimetic narrative, imitative or representative of an existing reality.<sup>27</sup>

The narrative's repetitive mode also means that the forward movement of time is counterbalanced through constant and frequent returns to earlier textual moments. Repetitions slow down the course of time, as Calvino maintains, referring to popular and folk literature and oral storytelling techniques (Calvino 1988, 31-54). One of the examples Calvino mentions in his discussion is the *1001 nights*, and, in her analysis of this text, Sandra Naddaff shows how the repetitive mode governing the narratives making up the text serves to expand time and to save the life of the narrator of the tales, Shahrazad, who saves herself from certain death ordered by the king, by dilating her narrative over 1001 nights (Naddaff 1991). She has to create narrative time in order to 'kill time' and so as not to be killed herself; 'Not surprisingly, they narratively manifest

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<sup>27</sup> We are thus reminded of Mariás' origins, which involved a rejection of realism and mimesis, which I traced in the Introduction and Chapter I.

this irony by developing their tales according to repetitive structures of story and discourse which counteract the forward movement of time and in so doing undercut the fundamental impulse of narrative' (Naddaff 1991, 95).

I am not suggesting that *Corazón tan blanco* is a narrative similar to the *1001 nights*. Nevertheless, one of the effects of repetition exemplified by the latter is also evident in the former: like Shahrazad, Juan delays the ending of the story, the resolution of the mystery surrounding his father's past, by distending narrative time through repetitive amplifications.<sup>28</sup> This distension of time not only creates suspense and expectancy, but it also breaks up the linear progression of the narrative by forcing a backward narrative movement. Furthermore, the dilation of time mirrors the narrator's reluctance to resolve the secret, to reach the narrative's resolution. He postpones its end by lengthening the narrative through the repetitions.

Also, as Naddaff argues, the effort to forestall the inevitable end of time affects the narrative sense of ending: a work structured according to patterns of repetition is significantly different from that of a work progressing straightforwardly from beginning to end (Naddaff 1991, 95-96). In *Poétique de la prose*, Todorov proposes that a narrative traditionally consists of a beginning, which is characterized by a balance (*équilibre*) that is upset, thus creating an imbalance (*déséquilibre*) constituting the middle, which is then corrected at the end, restoring the equilibrium (Todorov 1971, 118-128). The beginning and the end are related but not identical. As Naddaff argues, therefore, 'the movement

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<sup>28</sup> The use of repetitions also seems to be closely related to oral literature and oral storytelling and, concomitantly, to children's literature; the technique of oral narration stresses repetition and a child's pleasure in listening to stories lies in the repetitive patterns and the expectation of repetition (Calvino 1988, 35). *Corazón tan blanco* is the result of a narrative which, in some ways, resembles oral storytelling: although not an interior monologue or stream of consciousness, the narration is essentially the subject's relation of his thoughts, a form of oral storytelling where the use of repetition is very appropriate and echoes the oral storytelling tradition, exemplified in the novel by the Cuban grandmother and her stories, rhymes, and songs with which the narrator was brought up.

inherent in any narrative structure requires a distance between beginning and end along which the narrative can unfold, and this distance in turn requires a difference between the two limiting points of the narrative' (Naddaff 1991, 96). If there were to be no distance nor difference between the two poles, the narrative would not be able to follow its course and it would not develop. However, Naddaff maintains:

A repetitive narrative [...], a narrative whose structural impulse is always to look backward, to turn back upon itself, necessarily subverts this sense of an ending as something in the distant and different future. (Naddaff 1991, 96)

Something similar occurs in *Corazón tan blanco*: the ending of the novel, the relation of Ranz's secret, takes us back to a distant past preceding the beginning of the novel itself, whilst, at the same time, repeating elements pertaining to past textual moments. The resolution turns out to be not something new and different, but something old and repeated, another death related in terms of all its similarities with preceding textual elements. In this sense, the narrative does not progress but regresses into a chronological and textual past.

Consequently, as this discussion of the temporal movements of repetition in *Corazón tan blanco* shows, the forward and backward movements of repetitions impede linear progression, subordinating the temporal process of the narrative to two opposed movements which constitute a continuous oscillation or eddying. Hence, repetitions also constitute nodal points in the novel to which other parts of the text lead and from which the connection to others can be traced.

#### *V. The materiality of language*

I have already argued that the returns to and of earlier textual elements, the insistent repetitions, draw attention to something other than themselves, that they invite a reading

in terms of their interrelationship with the whole narrative. Similarly, repetitions also foreground the primacy of the narrative's language. 'If the same sign is repeated in the text', says Szegedy-Maszák, 'the reader's attention shifts from the signified to the signifier' (Szegedy-Maszák 1983, 42).

Clearly, the insistent repetition of a word can eventually rob it of its meaning altogether, can make the sign lose its signified, as though repetition discloses the truly arbitrary nature of language. In *Corazón tan blanco* the difference between emphasizing a meaning through repetition and transcending that meaning and shifting the attention to the materiality of the signifier is not always perceptible. Nevertheless, repetitions encourage this shift.<sup>29</sup>

For example, the repetition of 'el de entonces' referring to Ranz's former self, appearing on four occasions in the short space of six lines, not only emphasizes a degree of alienation felt by Ranz with regard to his former self, but also lifts these three words off the page and separates them from their meaning, in the same way that Ranz feels a separation between his two selves (270). The repetitions of the words *sillón* and *silla* over a space of ten pages – 'silla', 'mullidos sillones o sofás de cinemascopio', 'durísimas sillas', 'torturadora silla', 'mortificante silla', 'criminales sillas', 'sillón holgado', 'silla homicida' – also dissociate the signifier from the signified, as well as enumerating the differing degrees of comfort of chairs sat on by interpreters (65-75). Other examples include the repetitions, on the same page, of *risa* (three times) and *miedo* (four) (55), as well as all the aforementioned repetitions over the length of the narrative as a whole. All, to a greater or lesser extent, therefore, take on a presence different from that of ordinary language. They point to a reality beyond language. It is

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<sup>29</sup> Forcing the possibilities of signification of words is what Navarro calls this process in the novel (Navarro 1992, 21),

for this reason that Naddaff argues that narratives dominated by the repetitive mode are not intended to be mimetic, that is, imitative of a definite reality: the emphasis shifts to another reality superimposed on the everyday or underlying it (Naddaff 1991, 118). And Kawin maintains that 'the aesthetics of repetition thus find their archetype in primitive religion, in the universal belief that an act or a word becomes more real through being repeated, not less real' (Kawin 1972, 93). It is to this other reality or order that we now turn our attention.

#### *VI. The uncanny*

As a linear temporal progression is countered by the repetitive mode which reveals the presence of the past in the present, the presence of elements pertaining to a previous generation (Ranz) in another (the narrator), the interpenetration of past and present, a correspondence with an atemporal, infinite, eternal realm seems to be suggested: what is repeated is no longer part of a specific moment in time, it is merely the manifestation of another order which is atemporal, as both Naddaff and Kawin maintain (Naddaff 1991, 117; Kawin 1972, 54).<sup>30</sup> In his discussion of repetition, Brown puts it in similar terms:

To express what is both an order and a mystery, rhythmic processes, repetitions with intricate variations, are the most appropriate of idioms. Repetition is the strongest assurance an author can give of order; the extraordinary complexity of the variations is the reminder that the order is so involute that it must remain a mystery. (Brown 1978, 115)

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<sup>30</sup> Thus, we are reminded of heredity's vertiginous and sinister ability to overcome death suggested by the repetition of the same face in three generations, which the narrator of *Todas las almas* discovers in the Ashmolean Museum, and the theme of Hardy's poem this repetition alludes to, both of which, just like the repetition of elements pertaining to Ranz's life in his son's, insinuate that 'any "thing" capable of overcoming death must possess limitless power' (Heusser 1994, 179). Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith have maintained that this reanimation of the 'deadness' of the past through repetition is the 'modern form of haunting' (Sage and Lloyd Smith 1996, 4).



Without wishing to dispel too much of the mystery enveloping it, it is this other, involute order, which becomes manifest through repetitions in *Corazón tan blanco*, and which I shall now examine.<sup>31</sup>

In the famous and groundbreaking essay entitled ‘The “Uncanny”’, Freud subjects this concept or quality of feeling to an intricate discussion (Freud 1974, XVII, 219-253). A lengthy etymological examination of the word *unheimlich* (for which ‘uncanny’ is but an approximate translation), which shows the word’s complex relationship to and coincidence with *heimlich*, its seemingly opposite term, leads to a detailed interpretation of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s short story ‘The Sandman’. This becomes a narrative exemplary and illustrative of Freud’s argument. Freud demonstrates how ‘the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar’ (Freud 1974, XVII, 220). *Corazón tan blanco* is a narrative also exemplary of Freud’s theory of the uncanny, as we will see through the prevalence of the features discussed by Freud. This sheds light on the nature of the involute order suggested by repetition.

Freud shows how the *repetition* of the same thing can produce uncanny feelings, how the unintended recurrence of the same situation can result in uncanniness and helplessness, how the involuntary repetition ‘surrounds what would otherwise be innocent enough with an uncanny atmosphere, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable when otherwise we should have spoken only of “chance”’ (Freud 1974, XVII, 236-237).<sup>32</sup> He explains that this idea of ascribing a secret meaning to an obstinate recurrence is the result of *superstition* (Freud 1974, XVII, 238). At times,

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<sup>31</sup> It is this involute order of repetition in Marías’ sixth novel, coupled with their seeming independence from human agency, that leads Ruth Christie to draw a comparison between repeated elements and ‘memes’ (Christie 1998).

<sup>32</sup> I highlight all the features pertinent to this part of the discussion by italicizing them, as they are subsequently shown to apply to *Corazón tan blanco*.

Freud argues, the perceived coincidences, the repetitions, and the *presentiments* felt as a result may be attributable to a kind of obsessional neurosis (1974, XVII, 239-240). But the effects of the uncanny can also be explained by a residue of an 'old, animistic conception of the universe' present in each of us today:

This was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings; by the subject's narcissistic overvaluation of his own mental processes; by the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and the technique of magic based on that belief; by the attribution to various outside persons and things of carefully graded magical powers, or '*mana*'; as well as by all the other creations with the help of which man, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to fend off the manifest prohibitions of reality. (Freud 1974, XVII, 240)

Freud emphasizes the importance of this by quoting himself from the book *Totem and taboo*, in a footnote which repeats his finding, but which is worth introducing for the same reason of emphasis: 'We appear to attribute an "uncanny" quality to impressions that seek to confirm the omnipotence of thoughts and the animistic mode of thinking in general, after we have reached a stage at which, in our *judgment*, we have abandoned such beliefs' (Freud 1974, XVII, 241n. 1). As a consequence of the presence of this residue of the animistic mode of thinking, uncanniness is the result of the *over-accentuation of psychical reality* in comparison with material reality. It is for this reason that, for example, the uncanny is experienced by many in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, argues Freud, as it is related to the *primitive fear of the dead* and *a lack of understanding* and *disbelief of death*. This is also why living persons are seen as uncanny, why we ascribe to them *evil intentions* and *special powers*, or why, more generally, we believe in the prompt fulfilment of wishes, secret injurious powers or the return of the dead (Freud 1974, XVII, 241-244). 'We – our primitive forefathers – once believed that these possibilities were realities,' explains Freud,

and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have surmounted these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. (Freud 1974, XVII, 247)

On a more general level, an uncanny effect is easily produced when the distinction between *imagination* and *reality* is effaced, 'as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes' (Freud 1974, XVII, 244). However, uncanny experiences also have another explanation. If in childhood, an affect, an emotion belonging to an emotional impulse, is repressed, then it is transformed into anxiety. Among the elements which are frightening, there is a class which can be shown to be something repressed which recurs; the uncanny is an element of this sort, irrespective of whether the uncanny was itself originally frightening or whether it was associated with another type of emotion (Freud 1974, XVII, 241). Therefore, as Freud's etymological discussion of the term already demonstrated, the uncanny is 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (Freud 1974, XVII, 241). As Freud has discussed in another seminal essay, 'Beyond the pleasure principle', to which he also refers us in his essay on the 'uncanny', the uncanny effect can be the result of a 'repetition compulsion', produced when the person cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him or her, and when what is not recalled may be the essential part, becoming thus 'obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past' (Freud 1984d, 288). The analyst's role is therefore to convert repetition to remembrance. Consequently, there are two classes of the uncanny which, as Freud says, are not always sharply

distinguishable. Both are produced by repetition: either because of a residue of an animistic or primitive conception of the world which ascribes a secret meaning to repetition or because of a repressed, and therefore frightening, infantile emotion which has been revived by some impression and leads to repetition compulsion (Freud 1974, XVII, 249).<sup>33</sup> Both classes of uncanny effects created by repetition emerge in *Corazón tan blanco*.

a) *The animistic conception of the universe*

Let us first look at instances of the uncanny produced by an *animistic conception of the universe*. The narrator of the novel is *superstitious*. Shortly after the wedding, he has a drink with Custardoy who is about to reveal to him aspects of Ranz's past which he did not know about when he tells the narrator: 'En todo caso espero que te vaya mejor que a tu padre, *y no quiero ser cenizo, toco madera*' (135 – my italics). Shortly afterwards, Custardoy repeats: 'No sé, podría preguntarte a ti, si te pasara lo mismo, *y no quiero ser cenizo, toco madera*' (140 – my italics). The narrator remarks on this repetition: 'Había vuelto a decir “cenizo”, pensé automáticamente en traducirlo al inglés, francés o italiano, no sabía el término en ninguna de ellas, “mal de ojo” sí, “evil eye”, “jettatura”, pero no es lo mismo' (140). Indeed, someone who is *cenizo* is someone who brings bad luck or, more generally, a spoilsport. This noun, coupled with its feminine equivalent and etymological origin *ceniza*, which becomes a motif, acquires a premonitory value as it is

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<sup>33</sup> Freud's essay on the uncanny has led to a lengthy debate and to various re-readings of Hoffmann's tale (see Cixous 1976, Weber 1978, Wright 1984, Hertz 1985, Kristeva 1991). Freud's conclusions regarding the uncanny have not been questioned, although he has been accused of using the theory of castration to avoid more disturbing themes in Hoffmann's work, such as repetition compulsion. Nevertheless, as Maud Ellmann argues, these readings reflect a move away from sexuality to death, which may also, however, be a way of rejecting Freud's 'most troubling discovery – the centrality of sexuality to psychic life' (Ellmann 1994b, 4).

used sylleptically in the novel: Ranz can be said to become *cenizo* through *ceniza*, a spoilsport who casts an evil shadow through ash.

What is more revealing than these elements of supersition is the narrator's reaction to Custardoy's professing to touch wood: 'Cada vez que anunciaba que tocaba madera no la tocaba, sino el cristal de su jarra. Yo, en cambio, tocaba mi silla' (140). This action of touching wood, which is meant to ward off evil and to impede the realization of an ill-omened thought, reveals his superstitious nature. Ranz is also superstitious, as is revealed during his discussion with his son on the latter's wedding day (100), as is the narrator's grandfather, who feared Ranz 'como al diablo, con superstición', Villalobos explains (246). In fact, Villalobos maintains that it was this superstitious fear that killed him (245-246). Let us not forget that this fear was caused by the repetition of death, that of Ranz's first two wives. The repetition of death creates the idea of something *inescapable* and *fateful*. A secret meaning is ascribed to repetition, when one should have spoken only of chance, as Freud says (Freud 1974, XVII, 237). 'Eso es un azar', says the narrator of what he thought were two wives dying after their marriage to Ranz; 'Pero tres veces es mucho azar', replies Custardoy, casting doubt on the chance nature of the deaths (136).

As we have already seen, the narrator also has a number of *presentiments* during the novel which are occasioned and accentuated by repetitions – for example, his marriage, his honeymoon, Cuba, scenes of people on street corners, and echoes of the past – based on the belief that something *fateful* and *inescapable* is about to befall him. Although he is in no way inhibited when it comes to knowing other people's secrets, like Berta's or Miriam's – in fact, he is quite curious and actively pursues the discovery of secrets – he is not willing to know his father's. This bears witness to the belief that

somehow the revelation of his father's secret will have serious repercussions on his own life, just as Casaldáliga's discovery of his father's long-kept secret in *El siglo* has a profound effect on him. It also attests the superstitious conviction that heredity may be capable of overcoming death, of repeating itself, hence the 'presentimientos de desastre' and the unease he feels upon returning from his trips and discovering that slow, small, but perceptible transformations in the décor of his new flat reveal the influence of his father, to the extent that it is starting to resemble his father's own.

The premonitions intensify on his honeymoon with Luisa, as a direct consequence of their stay in Havana and the narrator's encounter with Miriam, a scene which becomes premonitory, as we have seen. Miriam's figure is echoed repeatedly throughout the narration and her foreboding presence is amplified as a result (136, 140-141, 182, 215). As such, she is invested with powers which are of a somewhat *special order* and she becomes a sort of *spirit* warning us and the narrator of things to come, through the introduction of the extramarital affair, the instigation to murder, and the portending Cuban song. Furthermore, the narrator displays both an animistic *fear of death* and *disbelief of death* when he starts fearing for Berta's life in New York and Luisa's in Madrid, as well as repeating the already quoted 'la gente muere, parece imposible, pero la gente muere' (215-217).

Finally, Juan's narration in the first person consists mostly of the narrator's own thoughts (dialogues, although not entirely scarce, are infrequent). The novel is essentially a *narrativization* of the narrator's thoughts. As such, the narrator's *psychical reality* is foregrounded, and can even be said to be *overaccentuated*, not least through the multiple repetitions of individual thoughts, feelings, or ideas. In addition, the narrator, like that of



*Todas las almas*, can be said to be characterized by *narcissism*.<sup>34</sup> The narrator of *Corazón tan blanco* displays a narcissistic superstition when, for example, he maintains that a girl he knew since he was a child would have had a significantly better life had he chosen to marry her, an idea which recurs (109-110). This narcissism also explains the strong emphasis on *his own mental processes* which Freud would call an *overvaluation*. This becomes particularly manifest in the penultimate chapter where all of the narrator's previously repeated thoughts contribute to configuring the reality of Ranz's secret as they are, once again, repeated both by Ranz, as well as in the narrator's parenthetical insertions, acquiring an unsuspected and uncanny reality. Thus, they very much contribute to a partial *effacement of the distinction between imagination and reality: what was regarded as imaginary (the narrator's thoughts) appears in reality (Ranz's secret)*.

This, as we have already seen, is achieved by the way in which some elements, which up to that point were of a more figurative or rhetorical nature, are transformed into literal realities: for example, the Shakespeare quotation ('I have done the deed') which is actualized as it is literally what Ranz says of his murder, the Cuban song which becomes a reality (excepting the presence of the snake), or the pillow, a metaphor for matrimony, which becomes an actual murder weapon. What was imagined by the narrator is realized by the end of the novel; a potential world becomes an actual one.

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<sup>34</sup> The opening two sentences of *Todas las almas* give expression to the narrator's superstitious narcissism, as he himself recognizes: 'Dos de los tres han muerto desde que me fui de Oxford, y eso me hace pensar, *supersticiosamente*, que quizá esperaron a que yo llegara y consumiera mi tiempo allí para darme ocasión de conocerlos y para que ahora pueda hablar de ellos. No murieron hasta que yo dejé de tratarlos. De haber seguido en sus vidas en Oxford [...] tal vez aún estuvieran vivos. Este pensamiento no es sólo *supersticioso*, es también *vanidoso*' (Marias 1989a, 9 – my italics)

One of the consequences of the superstitious view of the world is also that, potentially, everything is interconnected.<sup>35</sup>

Crucially, the way the narrator escapes from the realization of the superstitious belief that heredity is capable of overcoming death, of repeating itself, is precisely by using his imagination – exactly the way in which the narrator of *El hombre sentimental* escapes from committing suicide – as opposed to his father, who does not use his imagination and therefore ends up murdering someone – just as Manur had not and thus ended up killing himself himself. ‘ “Lo pensé rápidamente, lo pensé *sin imaginármelo* y por eso lo hice”’, says Ranz of his crime (285 – my italics). The narrator parenthetically appends the following thought which encapsulates the difference between himself and his father: ‘ (“Imaginar evita muchas desgracias”, pensé, “quien anticipa su propia muerte rara vez se mata, quien anticipa la de los otros rara vez asesina, es preferible asesinar y matarse con el pensamiento” )’ (285). The use of the imagination is what distinguishes the narrator from his father and the narrator’s deed is more passive than his father’s: it amounts to telling a story imaginatively in which he is more of an observer and voyeur. Nevertheless, everything which strikes the narrator and some of the characters, as well as the reader in so far as there is an element of identification or empathy between reader and character(s), as uncanny, fulfils the condition of touching on these residues of animistic mental activity and allowing them to surface.

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<sup>35</sup> As Elide Pittarello argues, the view of the world in *Corazón tan blanco* is based on superstition: ‘Se, come in questo caso, il quadro del mondo non è costruito in base all’esperienza ma alla superstizione, *tutto può avere relazione con tutto*’ (Pittarello 1992, 80 – my italics).

b) *The return of the repressed*

Now let us examine the second class of uncanny produced by repetition, something repressed in childhood which recurs, 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (Freud 1974, XVII, 241). This is a repetition compulsion which is produced when the person cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him or her, and when what is not recalled may be the essential part, becoming thus constrained to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience, instead of *remembering* it as something belonging to the past.

This class of the uncanny can be said to be enacted in *Corazón tan blanco* and is experienced by the narrator rather than by the reader. The frequency and insistence of repetitions in the novel do make it possible to qualify them as more or less compulsive. I would argue that the repetitions can be read, in part, as manifestations of the narrator's compulsion to repeat repressed material as a contemporary experience, rather than remembering it as belonging to the past. What is being repressed is a knowledge of Ranz's secret. The narrator's resistance to uncovering it, his reluctance to delve into his father's past, is already an indication of repression, as resistance arises from elements of the mind which originally carried out repression, as Freud has explained (Freud 1974, XVIII, 19).

All of the elements repeated by the narrator during the course of the narrative turn out to be associated with Ranz's secret in the penultimate chapter. Significantly, after the revelation of the secret, in the last chapter the narrator becomes reconciled and content with his marriage to Luisa ('solamente hemos cambiado de estado, y eso no parece ser ahora tan grave ni incalculable' [295]). He becomes reconciled with his father

the way he knows him now ('como es ahora, como es ahora y yo lo recordaré principalmente' [299]). He looks for a change in career ('ahora estoy considerando nuevos trabajos' [293]). His life is changing and becoming more peaceful as he starts to spend more time at home ('ahora que sé que voy a estar en Madrid más quieto' [297]). He is recovering his ability to think errantly about the future ('ahora [...] vuelvo a pensar vagamente, a errar con el pensamiento en lo que ha de venir o puede venir' [293]), and, most importantly, his unease is dispelled ('ahora mi malestar se ha apaciguado' [293]).

This substantial shift, as though a spell had been broken, is given further weight by the use of the present tense, the repetition (anaphora) of *ahora*, and the more general emphasis on the present rather than the past. It shows that the narrator is finally at ease and that this change has been brought about by the revelation of his father's dark past. Indeed, the revelation of the secret seems to have had nothing less than a cathartic effect, like the one sought by psychoanalysis in its early days through the revelation of the patient's past, before the shift to treatment through transference. So, if this is the case, then the repressed material must be this aspect of the father's past, since all the significant repetitions of the narrative turn out to be those closely related to Ranz's secret. They are repetitions of the repressed material as contemporary experience, as the revelation, which induces the catharsis, makes plain. The only remaining link to 'prove' the enactment of Freud's theory of the uncanny as 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression', is to find in the text an indication of the narrator's familiarity with Ranz's past as a child.

Interestingly, the references to the narrator's childhood are many, suggesting that childhood has a significant part to play in understanding the narrative's meaning (for example: 22, 51-55, 98-100, 126, 142-143).<sup>36</sup> We come across the revelational passage at the end of his discussion with Custardoy and after the latter has let slip that his father has outlived three wives ('pero tres veces es mucho azar') without expanding on it. The narrator does not insist; he is still reluctant to know. However, suddenly he remembers – he recalls an incident in his childhood: 'Fue entonces cuando me vino un recuerdo perdido desde la niñez' (142). He remembers being at his grandmother's house because his mother, Juana, was ill. In the evening his father came by to collect him and after asking about her daughter, the narrator recollects his grandmother telling his father the following: '“No sé cómo eres capaz de irte por ahí a tus cosas con Juana enferma. No sé cómo no te pones a rezar y cruzas los dedos cada vez que tu mujer se resfría. Ya llevas dos perdidas, hijo”' (143 – my italics). The narrator then recalls how his grandmother immediately put her hand on her mouth in a belated effort to suppress what she had just let slip.

This incident suddenly remembered by the narrator shows that he was much more familiar with his father's past than he thought and than he has led the reader to believe. Evidently, this knowledge from his childhood was repressed and the repression contributed to the accentuation of his malaise and to the compulsion to repeat; hence the repetitive nature of his narrative. It is fair to say that there is no further indication of the narrator's familiarity with all the details of Ranz's secret, other than the uncannily prophetic emphasis placed by the narrator through repetition on certain elements shown to pertain to that secret. In any case, repetition in *Corazón tan blanco* also has uncanny

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<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Inés Blanca has argued that there is an unconscious rejection on the part of the narrator of adult life (Blanca 1992, 81).

effects, on the one hand for the reader and the narrator as unintended recurrences of elements surround what would otherwise be less conspicuous with an uncanny atmosphere as a result of an animistic conception of the world, and, on the other hand, as a dramatization of Freud's other class of uncanny experience felt by the narrator throughout the novel in the perception of familiarity of repeated elements estranged through repression.

The variety of the effects of repetition in Mariás' sixth novel is extraordinary. Repetitions echo earlier elements of the narrative, or elements of other narratives, or of the author's own life. They foreshadow what is to come. They link, emphasize, and develop meaning, as well as creating motifs and themes and uniting the narrative. They contribute to the novel's rhythm and subject the narrative to opposed temporal movements. Crucially, repetitions also unite the narrative as a whole, stitching it together internally. In addition, repetitions draw attention to something other than themselves, inviting a reading in terms of their interrelationship with the narrative structure as a whole, as well as foregrounding the materiality of language and the importance of the imagination. Thus they point to another order, a secret meaning inherent in them, an underlying reality related to the uncanny effects they also produce, an order explainable by Freud's theory of the uncanny, which is enacted in the narrative. Furthermore, I would venture to say that repetitions, through these myriad effects, not only highlight the importance of form and style, but ultimately suggest the potential interconnectedness of everything. To maintain, therefore, as one reviewer of the novel has done, that repetitions are unnecessary, is to fail to comprehend not only the



significance of repetition, but also the import of the narrative<sup>37</sup>: repetitions are not only necessary, they are indispensable to this narrative – without repetitions there would simply be no narrative.

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<sup>37</sup> 'Todavía le queda salvar el recurso a la repetición innecesaria', advises Rosa Mª Belda (Belda 1994, 247).

## Chapter VI

### *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí:*

#### The interconnectedness of the world

*Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* is Javier Marías' seventh and last novel to date. It represents, together with *Corazón tan blanco*, the culmination of the process of novelistic maturation, for reasons which I shall discuss in this chapter. Marías achieves a consummate synthesis and equilibrium of significant elements prevalent in previous novels: the influence of foreign literatures, a loose and digressive style, aphorisms, similes, the presence of uncertainty, the manifestation of a significant creative imagination, associative processes of fictionalization of material, and repetition and its effects. Furthermore, and this is the main focus of this chapter, in this last novel we have the configuration of a distinct *Weltanschauung* which is the outcome of the fertile association of precisely all the above elements and is also related to a definite turn to Spain as prominent setting and backdrop to his narrative world.

*Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* was first published in 1994, two years after *Corazón tan blanco*.<sup>1</sup> Compared to Marías' average of an irregular rate of publication of novels, this constitutes a quick succession, pointing to a creatively productive period embracing both novels. Thus, the temporal proximity of their creation is related to a creative affinity and a number of parallels between the two novels attest this. The narrative structure of *Mañana* is governed by the same circularity and is therefore not dissimilar to that of the preceding work: it opens with the relation of one death and ends

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<sup>1</sup> All references are to the 1994 Anagrama edition of the novel, unless otherwise indicated.

with that of another. The opening scenes of both novels are those of a woman's mysterious death and the circumstances surrounding the death have repercussions and create a web of unanswered questions which come to constitute a secret interwoven into the present life of the protagonist and revealed at the end of the narrative. (Indeed, Mariás' last three novels start with the relation of one or more deaths, while *El hombre sentimental* ends with one.) The final scene of this novel and the penultimate scene of the previous one are identical in that they both consist of the narrator listening to the revelation of a secret incorporating a death, whilst he intercalates his parenthetical, digressive thoughts, which are repetitions and syntheses of previous thoughts, in brackets. The protagonist is a narrator who, as a script- and ghost-writer, is, once again, a professional mediator of information with an acute awareness of language whose first person narration is characterized by a distinctive and recognizable voice. If in *Corazón tan blanco* the narrator was rather passive, especially in that he did not wish to know his father's secret, in this novel the narrator is more active, although he claims to be 'una persona pasiva que nunca quiere nada' (107, 171). Not only does he himself become implicated in the sudden death of another, but he single-mindedly pursues a series of unanswered questions raised by this death.

Significantly, identical types, patterns, and effects of repetition also condition this narrative. One of the main effects of repetition in the previous novel was to produce links (for example, between characters, their lives, scenes, past and present). In *Mañana* such connections, not merely the result of repetition, are even more widespread, to the extent that they come to form a web of interconnectedness of virtually everything the novel contains. It may be argued that the interconnectedness or interrelationship of things is a common concern in literature and therefore hardly worth highlighting.

However, I would argue that its presence in Marías' work deserves discussion for two reasons: firstly, due to its explicitness and significant salience in his latest novel, in which it gives rise to a particular novelistic view of the world which merits attention in its own right; secondly, and more importantly from the point of view of Marías' novelistic development, because the interconnectedness is a product of his stylistic evolution and therefore intimately related to – if not part of – style.

## I.

### a) Madrid

Before tracing the element of interconnectedness, I should like to look at the significance of Madrid with regard to the novel and to Marías' novelistic development as a whole. *Mañana* is his first novel exclusively set in Spain and entirely inhabited by Spanish characters. Although the city of London also figures in the narrative, it is not, strictly speaking, a setting. Rather, it becomes a vaguely mythical or unreal reference point in the narrator's imagination and none of the action of the novel is directly set in London (the only episode which actually takes place in London is presented in doubly mediated form through the narrator's relation of an event recounted to him by another character). Even though I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of this fact, it is significant precisely because, as I have argued in Chapter I, his early novels were characterized by a radical rejection of and flight from things Spanish and because the presence of Madrid is a significant element in this narrative. The importance of this evolution will be addressed again in the conclusion to the thesis.

Most of the settings in Marías' novels and many of the characters have been non-Spanish so far. As I have already discussed, *Los dominios del lobo* is set in various states

and major cities of the USA and wholly made up of North American characters.

*Travesía del horizonte* is set in Britain (London and Scotland) and the Mediterranean Sea and inhabited by mostly British and Northern European characters. *El siglo*'s backdrop is Lisbon and an unnamed country (potentially but not explicitly Spain) and populated by characters whose nationality is indeterminate. *El hombre sentimental* is the first novel to be set in Spain (Madrid), but none of the characters are residents of this city; some of them are foreigners (Belgian), and, in addition, the city does not loom large at all in the narrative. Equally, there are very few concrete references to the locale and the few specific remarks about the city are quite negative in nature. *Todas las almas* is set in Oxford and all of the characters, with the exception of the narrator, are British. *Corazón tan blanco* is only his second novel set in Spain – Madrid again – but not exclusively: a substantial part of the novel is set in New York, Havana, and, to a lesser extent, Geneva. As was the case in *El hombre sentimental*, Madrid is not significant as a setting, as it remains non-specific through lack of concrete references (with the exception of the Prado museum and a number of references to existing restaurants)<sup>2</sup> and therefore adds nothing to the narrative as a whole. On the two occasions that Madrid and Spain provide the setting for his work, it can be said to be irrelevant and interchangeable with any other city, foreign or not, without in any way affecting the narratives.

Quite the opposite is true of *Mañana*, where Madrid looms quite large. Firstly, all the action, excepting a brief incursion into the Chamartín area (215), is set in four specific parts of the city: Moncloa, Chamberí, Salamanca, and Centro. These are clearly recognizable through the frequent references to particular streets (Conde de la Cimera [25, 28, 71, 245, 266, 274, 281-283], Reina Victoria [29, 46, 71], General Rodrigo [29,

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<sup>2</sup> La Trainera, La Ancha, La Fonda, La Dorada, Alkalde, Nicolás, Rugantino, Fortuny, and El Café are restaurants the narrator eats in with his father.

71], Hermanos Bécquer [25, 200, 237, 239-242, 263], Castellana [200-1, 214, 237, 239, 241, 265], María de Molina [201], General Oraa [207, 239, 240-1], Fortuny [213, 219, 237, 244], Marqués de Riscal [213, 244], Jenner [213, 244], Fernando el Santo [213, 244], Monte Esquinza [213, 244], Velázquez [233], Lista/Ortega y Gasset [233, 237], Princesa and Quintana [253], Bailén [254, 316], Paseo del Pintor Rosales [254], and Alcalá and Gran Vía [122, 175]), palaces (Palacio Real and Palacio de Liria [255]), various types of establishments (the Madrid racecourse, setting of an extended scene [299-319], two stores which form part of the VIPS chain [75, 233], the Dresdner Bank [239, 244], the US, German, and other embassies [201, 213, 219], the restaurant Nicolás [278] – also referred to in *Corazón tan blanco* – and the Hospital de La Luz [25]), a square (Plaza de Oriente [255]), a cathedral and graveyard (Nuestra Señora de la Almudena [90]), a statue (of the poet Vicente Aleixandre [71]), and the Parque de la Montaña (254).

Secondly, the presence of Madrid in the novel is further foregrounded as the narrator – his name, Víctor, is revealed at a very late stage, as was the case in previous novels (216)<sup>3</sup> – paints a portrait of the city, not only as he wanders through its various locales, but also through a number of aphorisms or parenthetical remarks of a general nature on the city.

Thus, the narrator observes that Madrid is a tumultuous city, crowded at all hours (311), and he repeatedly tells us that it is a city that never sleeps and one which therefore makes sleeping difficult (24-5, 204), a difficulty compounded by its burglar alarms which tend to set themselves off and to which nobody pays attention, thus rendering

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<sup>3</sup> The accentuated 'i' of the narrator's name symbolically marks Marías' development from his complete rejection of Spanishness, which saw him omit the written accent in the same name in his second novel ('Victor Arledge'; an omission partly justifiable by the fact that it is a foreign name in this instance), to his turn to Spain in his last novel.



them useless (258). As a consequence, 'la hora de la noche en que todo guarda silencio de mutuo acuerdo' is an hour which does not exist in Madrid, the narrator concludes (257-8). (An exception are the peaceful and secluded tree-lined streets of Fortuny, Marqués de Riscal, Monte Esquinza, Jenner and Fernando el Santo which are home to a number of embassies [213].) Perhaps this explains the length of the Madrid morning which, as the narrator tells us 'es en Madrid todo el tiempo hasta que se almuerza' (282). Madrid's citizens contribute to the lack of quietude in that they speak loudly: 'En Madrid todo el mundo habla alto' (318). Many of them, namely the thousands of people from the provinces who come to Madrid to get ahead and prosper, are also characterized by a vulgar speech, notes the disapproving Víctor, as, for instance, they do not know how to pronounce the final letter *d* of *Madrid* (104).

Finally, the narrator likens Madrid to an island: 'Esta ciudad que ya desde entonces no ha sabido desacostumbrarse a vivir y ser como una isla' (175). The weather in Madrid during the month which makes up the primary plot's temporal framework (from the the beginning of the novel when the narrator witnesses the death of the woman to the death of another woman recounted to him at the end), contributes to the insular and enchanted atmosphere of the city and the narrative. It is foggy when the narrator leaves the house of the woman who has just died (71), as is the entire month which is as foggy as never before this century, we are told, just as the preceding month had been stormy (300-301). Moreover, during this month, it rains the way the rain always tends to fall in Madrid, namely 'uniforme y cansinamente y sin viento', the narrator explains (121).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A truncated tree lying on the pavement, possibly caused by a violent storm the same month, prompts the narrator to comment on the time it takes for repairs to be undertaken in the capital of Spain: 'En Madrid nadie arregla los desperfectos inmediatamente' (237).

Madrid as an island is indeed Javier Marías' own view of the city, as he affirms in one of the many articles on the Spanish capital he has written, especially since the early 1990s, which anticipate his novelistic turn to Spain: 'Madrid se siente hoy una isla, más isla aún que las Baleares o las distantes Canarias. O, dicho de otra manera, se siente *exclusivamente* ciudad, desgajada del resto del territorio español pese a ser su centro geográfico y administrativo' (1995c, 274). Coupled with the fact that Marías sees the distinguishing feature of the citizens of Madrid as being a lack of characteristic features, this line of reasoning allows him to conclude: 'Así, Madrid no es ya castellana y cada vez es menos española (¿cómo ser parte de un todo del que se siente aislada y que además la mira con hostilidad y rencor?); sin embargo, no le cabe duda que es europea, una ciudad europea' (Marías 1995c, 274). Having thus isolated Madrid from the rest of Spain, Marías then treats the city as a distinct and relatively non-Spanish entity, as, indeed, he does in the novel. The Madrid in *Mañana* is free of any *casticismo*, has no regional features, and is less a Spanish and, if anything, more of a European, cosmopolitan metropolis, although, as we shall see, it is a city with a past. The insular weather (foggy, rainy, stormy, and windy) could be said to be more typically British than Spanish and, together with other elements such as the urban features of metropolitan life which contribute to a transformed perception of the urban environment as phantasmagoric, helps to create a spectral setting, as Kathleen Glenn puts it (Glenn 1996, 85). Being thus set apart, Madrid is therefore also a no-man's-land, 'una topografía expropiada, el supuesto nombre de una sombría tierra de nadie' (Pittarello 1994b, 225).

*b) Madrid and the interconnectedness of past and present*

The narrator's characterization of Madrid as an island concludes a passage on the Spanish Civil War and, in particular, the two-and-a-half-year siege and bombardment of the city of Madrid by Nationalist forces, which is what the narrator sees as the origin of the city's insular status. This flashback is triggered precisely by sudden thunder followed by heavy rainfall which the narrator witnesses from inside a restaurant:

Empezó a llover ávidamente [...] como si la lluvia tuviera que aprovechar su duración tan breve o fuera una incursión aérea combatida por artillería. En el plazo de medio minuto vimos amontonarse gente de la calle a la puerta del restaurante, vimos correr a mujeres y hombres y niños para protegerse de lo que venía del cielo, siempre como los hombres y mujeres y niños de los años treinta en esta misma ciudad entonces sitiada, que corrían buscando refugio para protegerse también de lo que venía del cielo y de los cañonazos que venían de las afueras. (174)

Then follow a number of references to the hills from where Madrid was shelled (Ángeles, Garabitas) and to some of the targets, such as the building of the Telefónica and the nearby Café Negresco which was hit accidentally, forcing its unperturbed and resigned clientele to frequent the neighbouring La Granja del Henar (174-175).

This is merely one instance of a number of references to the past of the city of Madrid and of the narrator's own life. The narrator's frequent references to what constitute interrelated urban and personal pasts come to form a web of ties with the present time of the narration, thus highlighting the interconnectedness of past and present, as in the example of the siege of Madrid explaining the city's present insular nature.

It is worth noting how the connection between present and past, the analogy between rain and aerial bombardment, as well as that between groups of people running, is established by way of a simile whose mark is 'como', a rhetorical device and mark

which I showed was used excessively in *El siglo* but subsequently much less. In this seventh novel the simile makes a return, only here the tenors of the figure are no longer extravagant. They are not aimed at drawing attention to themselves as the simile serves the very specific narrative purpose of establishing connections. Furthermore, the references to and analogies with the past are always the result of digressions, of parenthetical remarks, of the narrator's errant and conjectural mind.

The toy planes of the deceased woman's son Eugenio, which hang from the ceiling of his room, prompt the first digressive reference to the Spanish Civil War and also set the scene of the subsequent allusions to the same conflict (32-33). Thus, a glimpse of a scene of aerial combat from a film on the Battle of Britain reminds the narrator of the planes that bombarded and those that defended Madrid and their nicknames amongst its citizens (247). Furthermore, preceding the aforementioned example, there is another simile (whose mark again is 'como') motivated by rain and establishing a link between the citizens of Madrid seeking shelter from the rain and those trying to find shelter from bombardment in the Gran Vía more than half a century earlier (122). On the narrator's nocturnal wandering through the city two and a half years prior to his encounter with Marta – the woman who was to die in his arms – he walks down Rosales and Ferraz<sup>5</sup> as he passes the Parque de la Montaña, in which now stands the Egyptian temple Debod, and his mind wanders back to the past recalling that 'en Rosales estuvo el Cuartel de la Montaña donde se combatió ferozmente al tercer día de nuestra guerra, hace ya tantos años' (254). In addition, there are a couple of consecutive references to the time preceding the war (312): in the scene at the races the narrator is reminded by a wad of new bills of those of the Second Republic ('antes de

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<sup>5</sup> This street name is not mentioned, but the narrator would be on this street, which is the continuation of the Paseo del Pintor Rosales, if, as he does, he were passing the Parque and continuing on Bailén.

nuestra guerra se fabricaban en Inglaterra'), the latter in turn triggering the recollection, through epanalepsis, of the racecourse's location prior to the Civil War ('antes de nuestra guerra el hipódromo estaba en la Castellana, no fuera de la ciudad como ahora'). It has to be clarified that these recollections of Madrid's – and Spain's – past are not the result of the narrator's own experiences, since he had not been born then. Instead, they are mediated or indirect memories, as he makes plain when he says that the images he recalls are the result of documentaries and photographs of the Civil War he has seen (122).

Nevertheless, the references to a more recent past are his own. Such is the case of the two parenthetical mentions of the Franco years occasioned by Téllez Orati's wealth and social position (including his long-standing connections to the present King and his court) which make the narrator speculate about his past, using the conjectural perfect conditional – a tense which I showed was used strategically in the two extensive conjectural scenes discussed in Chapter III – in the second instance (131, 237).<sup>6</sup>

Such is also the case of the final yet significant group of references to the past: these are made up of the narrator's memories of the Madrid of his own childhood, in which urban and personal pasts merge. So, in an excursus of three pages, the narrator recalls the names of – amongst others – the streets, cinemas, hotels, bookshops, fruit shops, and patisseries that contributed to configuring his childhood (197-200), past names which, as he makes plain in an aphorism, remain a permanent presence in his memory: 'Los nombres no cambian y se quedan fijos en la memoria cuando se quedan, sin que nada ni nadie pueda arrancarlos' (197).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Téllez Orati is the father of Marta whom the narrator has machinated to meet and work with without him or his family knowing that the narrator is the mysterious stranger who had been at Marta's side the night she died while her husband was away on a business trip to London.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that the narrator's childhood seems to be identical with Marías' own, as the biographical information he has divulged in numerous articles and essays reveals (see Marías 1991a,

Again, whilst Marta lies dying in her bed, Víctor's mind wanders and he enacts her possible thoughts in the first person. He creates another conjectural scene which incarnates a potential reality, as he speculates, again using a range of tenses, that those objects for which no one will have any use after her death will have to be disposed of. He laments the fact that there are no longer any rag-and-bone men in Madrid. This thought leads him to an even more digressive passage, as he departs from his first digression on the rag-and-bone men whom he remembers from his childhood and who were to be seen on their carts pulled by mules and stacked high with a gypsy girl sitting on the very top of the stack. These stacks were often as high as Madrid's doubledecker buses, which, in turn, in yet another inset errant analogy, were like ('como') London's buses, only blue and, he comments, circulating on the other side of the road (40-41). Those blue buses are mentioned again 173 pages later in conjunction with the blue trams that also used to run in Madrid at the time – 'sobre sus rieles de los que aún se ven tramos como fósiles incompletos' – when the narrator finds himself in the peaceful and secluded tree-lined streets of Fortuny, Marqués de Riscal, Monte Esquinza, Jenner, and Fernando el Santo, close to where he grew up, he explains as his mind strays (213-4).

In the latter part of the narrative, during the aforementioned nocturnal walk, Víctor again recalls the rag-and-bone men, although this time the thought is kindled by two white horses he comes across – 'resonaban los ocho cascos sobre el pavimento brillante, un sonido antiguo, cascos en la ciudad, algo insólito en estos tiempos' – which remind him not only of the horses pulling the various carts or wagons belonging to the rag-and-bone and delivery men of his childhood, but also of the fact that animals in general – mules, horses, donkeys, cows – were a common sight in the Madrid of his

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1995a, 1997a, 1999a). This therefore constitutes another instance of the processes of fictionalization of biographical material through its association within a fictional narrative which we observed in Chapter V.



childhood (254-5). In fact, during this nocturnal walk the narrator wanders aimlessly, both physically and mentally, as his wandering mind is allowed to err and make connections.

When he is attending Marta's funeral, one of the gravediggers reminds him of stokers of the past and of the boilers which are no longer in existence, after he likens him – 'como si fuera' – to a statue (102). Similarly, on the night of his nocturnal walk, but prior to it, the narrator again aimlessly drives along the Castellana passing some landmarks which he associates with his childhood:

Conduje en silencio por la Castellana bien conocida, algunos lugares siguen en su sitio, no muchos, el Castellana Hilton ya no se llama así pero para mí es el Hilton, el cartel muy visible de House of Ming, un lugar y nombre prohibidos y misteriosos durante la infancia, y luego Chamartín, el estadio del Real Madrid que también trae a la memoria nombres que no se han borrado ni se borrarán ya nunca. (214-5)

It is significant that, as this passage attests, these vestiges of his and Madrid's past live on in his memory, and that they are also so indelibly etched in it that they either supplant or simultaneously coexist with the present – 'el Castellana Hilton ya no se llama así pero para mí es el Hilton'. Thus the past prevails over or subsists alongside the present. This idea is subtly repeated in the narrative. So, the Dresdner Bank building to which the narrator refers on two occasions used to be the Colegio Alamán of his childhood, a school close to his own, and for the narrator 'el edificio sigue siendo el colegio Alamán' (239). As far as he is concerned, this building is now simultaneously both the bank of the present and the school of the past, and so he refers to it as 'ese banco o colegio' and the 'Dresdner Bank o Colegio Alamán' (239, 244).

The same juxtaposition of past and present is effected in the case of the avenue now officially called Ortega y Gasset and still known by its past name, Lista: 'Al llegar a la esquina de Lista o bien Ortega y Gasset (esta calle cambió de nombre hace mucho ,

pero aún impera el antiguo y por él se la conoce, mala suerte para el filósofo)' (233). In this case, too, past and present coexist, as this street is again referred to as both 'Ortega y Gasset o Lista' four pages later (237).

The past and present are interwoven in the narrative by way of the coexistence of four distinct temporal layers which make up the narrative itself. Although there is a chronological development of what could be called the 'main' plot line framed by the month which elapses between the narrator witnessing Marta's death and being told of the other death, the frequent incursions into the epoch of the Civil War, the narrator's childhood (and the Franco years), and the eventful night of roaming which precedes, by two and a half years, the chain of events set off by Marta's death, deform linear temporality and invite us to see the past as integral and interconnected to the present. The juxtaposition of past and present, of temporally distinct moments or layers experienced in their simultaneity, creates the interconnectedness and interplay between the two, demanding that they be apprehended not in isolation but in their interrelatedness, thus giving rise to a certain *pantemporality*. This juxtaposition also compresses time in space, effecting a kind of atemporality, or what Masoliver Ródenas calls 'la inmovilización del recorrido para convertirse en instante' (1995, 20).<sup>8</sup> A web of interconnectedness extends and embraces the narrator's life and city, linking the urban and mental landscapes – Madrid is an 'itinerario expresión del itinerario mental', as Masoliver puts it (1995, 20) – most notably exemplified in the narrator's nocturnal physical and mental wanderings, and their respective and overlapping past and present. It should also be noted that the references to specific urban-cum-national and personal

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<sup>8</sup> Related to this atemporality are the ideas of supplantation and usurpation, which become motifs in the novel (107, 110-1, 262). For further evidence of Marías's interest in the ideas of usurpation and the compression of time in space see also Marías 1999a ('Jünger y Gellhorn', 219-221) and 1999b (23).

pasts are very much an indication of the author's growing interest in and concern with the past and with stemming the flow of forgetting through recounting, first signalled in *El siglo* and often made explicit in essays such as 'Ficción y recuerdo' where he argues that fiction is a fundamental way of remembering the past, 'la única manera de que perviva será a través de su recreación artística' (Marías 1997c, 82; see also Marías 1994d). Recreating the past in a fictional narrative is a way of approaching Madrid's and Spain's recent past not directly but indirectly, in a subtle, mediated, or oblique way.

*c) The interconnectedness of the dead and the living*

A further reflection of this preoccupation comes when, in one of the novel's many aphorisms, the narrator declares that the living survive longer after they have died by being remembered, memory thus keeping the dead alive, so to speak (160). This probably also informs and explains the explicit reference to the poet Aleixandre and the oblique one to Juan Benet (71, 182).<sup>9</sup> The novel itself is in many ways about death and the interconnectedness between the dead and the living, between life and death.<sup>10</sup> This interrelatedness between the two states was more pronounced in the past, maintains the narrator in another sententia, as in the past the dead or their memory was revered and their death 'afectaba al conjunto de la vida, el muerto se llevaba en verdad algo de las otras vidas de sus seres queridos y *no había por consiguiente tanta separación entre los dos estados, se relacionaban y no se daban tanto miedo*' (323 – my italics). In the narrator's mind this interconnectedness still holds sway in the present, to the extent that, at the end of the novel, and as a result of the series of events in which the narrator has

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<sup>9</sup> The reference to Benet comes by way of a description of the voice of Marta's husband containing the words of the title of Benet's trilogy on the Spanish Civil War entitled *Herrumbrosas lanzas* ('su voz herrumbrosa como espada o armadura o lanza'; 182 – my italics).

<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, the novel is riddled with aphorisms on life and death (see, for example, 24, 26, 72, 81, 90, 155, 160, 323, 362).

found himself enmeshed, the differences between the two have been effaced and he no longer comprehends the two terms (360).

It is Marta's death which triggers the entire chain of events that lead the narrator from the bedside of the deceased to his leaving her flat in the middle of the night after preparing some food for her two-year-old son whom he leaves asleep in the flat, to the narrator's curiosity and growing concern as he scans the death notices looking for her name on subsequent days, to his attending her funeral as an unknown bystander and finding a way to get to know her father and family without them being aware that it is he who is the mysterious stranger, and to him eventually revealing the secret and becoming the repository of her husband's own secret. The narrator becomes, as he himself repeats throughout the novel, the link between Marta and the others, and therefore more generally between the dead and the living (56, 81, 82, 160-2). 'Todo estaba suspendido', Víctor states the day after Marta's death,

pero no sabía hasta cuándo o de qué dependía para que se reanudase: tenía interés y prisa por saber si habían descubierto el cuerpo y si el niño estaba a salvo [...] Y sin embargo preveía que una vez averiguado eso tampoco podría reanudar sin más mis días y mis actividades, como si el vínculo establecido entre Marta Téllez y yo no fuera a romperse nunca [...] *Yo me había convertido en el hilo.* (81-2 – my italics)

And this is so because he is under a spell and haunted by Marta, both words he uses repeatedly, the latter in English (121, 167, 182, 231, 237, 278, 337). In this respect the narrative is the story of an enchantment, just as the narrative of *El hombre sentimental* was the story of a dream, that of *Todas las almas* the story of a disturbance, and that of *Corazón tan blanco* the story of a malaise. Thus, the suggestion is that narrative, narration, and writing are the result of a disruption of a 'normal' order, a temporary suspension of the narrator's normal course of life and state of mind, a temporary

madness of sorts. Each time, the narrator returns to his senses and normal life after the events making up the narration have run their course.<sup>11</sup>

The narrator is haunted by the dead Marta, that is to say, as Pittarello argues (1994b, 226), he becomes inhabited by her. He is the temporary dwelling chosen by a dead person to postpone, by way of the living, her definitive disappearance:

Es sólo que me ha ocurrido una cosa horrible y ridícula y me siento *como si* estuviera bajo un encantamiento, frecuentado, acechado, revisitado, habitado, mi cabeza habitada y también mi cuerpo habitado y *haunted* por quien no he conocido más que en su muerte. (121 – first italics mine)

Consequently, Pittarello explains: ‘Como quien sueña es involucrado en acciones que no dependen de sus decisiones, así este personaje no puede estar quieto aunque no quiere nada, aspira a ocultarse pero busca un contacto con la familia de Marta Téllez’ (Pittarello 1994b, 226). For reasons only this enchantment can explain, the narrator, in spite of an initial urge to hide and to remain a nobody and despite being ‘una persona pasiva que nunca quiere nada’ (107, 171), aimlessly turns into a wandering vinculum not only of the dead and the living and the past and the present, but also of virtually everything in his path, making connections between people materialize simply because he sees them.

#### *d) The interconnectedness of people*

The connections the narrator sees are best described as analogical: he detects or ascertains similarities or correspondences between people. One of the first is the tie binding the narrator and the boy Eugenio, namely the toy planes which the latter possesses and the former remembers owning in his childhood (32-3, 248). In addition,

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, the narrator of this last novel does not fully recover. The significance of this is discussed in the Conclusion.

the boy, like the narrator, is also said to be in a state of enchantment due to his mother's death (127). These initially loose bonds prefigure a potentially substantial one, namely one suggested by the narrator as he errantly speculates about the possibility of living with Marta's sister, Luisa, thereby becoming a paternal figure for the boy were his own father to renounce living with him (271-2), something which appears to be a distinct possibility, despite the fact that, as the narrator maintains, Eugenio represents the bridge connecting his father's past, present, and future (101).

Luisa is another person with whom the narrator perceives a certain affiliation which intimates the potential future kinship between them alluded to towards the end. During the funeral of her sister he empathizes with her in respect of the solitude of siblings (92-4). During her father's and his visit to the King, the narrator kneels down to tie Téllez's shoelace and feels at that moment united with her, as he had seen her do exactly the same at the funeral: 'Le ató el zapato haciéndole doble nudo, *como si él fuera un niño y yo fuera Luisa, su hija en el cementerio con la que por un momento me sentí identificado o quizá hermanado*' (158 – my italics). 'Más de una cosa nos une', he asserts later in the narrative, 'los dos hemos atado el mismo zapato' (271). By tying the same untied shoelace, they also tie a knot uniting them. (The shoe-tying posture also prompts another analogy, namely between the narrator and Orson Welles' character Falstaff in the film *Chimes at midnight* or *Falstaff*, as it is known in Britain [1966], where the latter also falls on his knee imploring King Hal.<sup>12</sup> Welles' film and Laurence Olivier's production of *Richard III* are the two Shakespearean intertexts in *Mañana*. The latter furnishes not only the novel's title, but repeated allusions to both, coupled with

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<sup>12</sup> In this film Welles brought together all the Shakespeare Falstaff parts from *Henry IV* (I and II), *Henry V*, and *The merry wives of Windsor* 'to create a portrait of the character as his privileged friendship with Prince Hal passes gradually from affection to bitterness, disillusionment, and decay' (Cook 1990, 435).



other cinematic references, contribute to the web of interconnectedness spanning the novel.) He again feels united with Luisa as his roaming mind discovers, when they both listen to the recorded messages of Marta's answering machine tape which the narrator took with him on the fateful night (294).

Víctor also digressively discerns links between himself and a prostitute (130), Prince Hal (200), the actor Peter Lorre in *M* and a vampire (240-241), the King – not Shakespeare's Richard III but the 'real' one whom the narrator meets – (expressed by way of the use of 'como' in all cases [245, 246, 252]), and Eugenio's father Eduardo Deán (Deán himself also sees this connection between them, calling it the intertwining, *el entrecruzamiento* [335-6]).

Deán's face is associated with Fred MacMurray's, the protagonist of the appropriately entitled *Remember the night* (1940), which the narrator happens to watch, muted, at Marta's side on the night of her death, (22-3, 163), and he is also likened, due to his jawbone and cleft chin – again through the use of 'como' – to a comic strip hero and to the actors Cary Grant and Robert Mitchum (99, 163). Other analogical links include that established between the narrator's ex-wife Celia and a stranger, both of whom have pleaded with others through answering machines using the same tone and words (204), and also that between Celia and Richard III, both terrified by spectres and screaming in the same way. In the case of the former, however, in one of the novel's scenes characteristic of ghost stories, what seems to her to be an apparition is nothing other than her former husband standing at the foot of the bed in the middle of the night, illuminated by a bolt of lightning (263). Indeed, the figure of the ghost and references to ghosts are frequent in the narrative, related to the idea of haunting and contributing to the spectral and enchanted atmosphere and to the various levels of interconnectedness,

as well as raising questions regarding the narrator's identity, who emphatically reiterates he is a ghost-writer, elaborating on the term and its implications and not hesitating to call himself a ghost (see, in particular, 110, 289, 340). A cleaning lady is also likened to a witch and *banshee* (152-153).

The affinities are not restricted to people: a link is also established between two horses, as one of the horses on the racecourse rears up reminding him of the mare which he had come across on his nocturnal walk through Madrid two and a half years previously – '*como aquella yegua de la calle Bailén dos años antes*' – and which had done exactly the same, thus again also bridging a temporal gap (316 – my italics).

Finally, in a discussion about Celia, the narrator also introduces a form of bond which is emblematic of the interconnectedness between people which embraces the entire narrative. During their conversation, the narrator speculates that his friend Ruibérriz may have slept with his ex-wife, in which case, he affirms, beginning the digression, a particular type of kinship would be linking them. He learned of the existence of such a relationship, he tells us, during his days as a student of English when he came across a now extinct Anglo-Saxon verb designating '*la relación o parentesco adquiridos por dos o más hombres que han yacido o se han acostado con la misma mujer*' (208). Despite the uncertainty surrounding the existence of this verb – the narrator is not certain what the verb is or, indeed, whether it exists – he finds the relationship it identifies elucidating and fruitful:

Pero existiera o no, este verbo o nombre medieval era de cualquier manera útil e interesante y también vertiginoso, y esa sensación de vértigo fue la que sentí al ver a la puta y pensar que si se llamaba Celia Ruiz Comendador me habría emparentado anglosajonamente con muchos hombres, además de con Ruibérriz de Torres según la hipótesis. Ese parentesco o vínculo lo ignoramos muchas veces los hombres como las mujeres, y su manifestación más tangible es la enfermedad, a la que están más expuestos los que vienen luego [...] Y ese

parentesco que tampoco se elige puede ser molesto o vejatorio u odioso cuando se sospecha o conoce [...] acaso era un vínculo principalmente de odio el que designaba el verbo y por esa razón no ha sobrevivido el verbo en la lengua heredera ni en otras, un nexo de rivalidad y malestar y celos y gotas de sangre, una red con estribaciones o afluentes múltiples que podrían llevarse hasta el infinito y que ya no queremos denominar o albergar en la lengua aunque sí la concebimos con el pensamiento y los hechos, también un fastidioso recordatorio, los conyacentes o cofolladores; si bien lo contrario es asimismo posible y hay quien sabe que ciertas asociaciones sexuales por mujer o por hombre interpuestos dan prestigio y ennoblecen a quienes las establecen o contraen o adquieren, a los que vienen *luego*, que reciben tanto la enfermedad o el aura. (209-210)<sup>13</sup>

This potentially vertiginous affinity, relationship, or kinship between people is the link *par excellence* and it allows the narrator to add another dimension to the already extensive web of interconnectedness. It re-introduces and amplifies the notion of ‘parentescos no consanguíneos’, an idea first mentioned in *Todas las almas*, as I indicated in Chapter IV, and also repeated in this novel (221). Consequently, not only is the narrator potentially connected with Ruibérriz (209), but Celia’s revenge, if she is a prostitute, is thus to associate the narrator with strangers (216, 221), as he indeed becomes related to the subsequent client of the prostitute on whom he spies after having also linked Celia to the prostitute, if they are not the same person (243, 252). Moreover, he is also thus tied (creating the neologism *connovio*) to the present husband of Celia (325) and he speculates on the kinship between himself and both Deán and Marta’s secret lover Vicente, which came close to being forged but was not (253).

#### *e) Potential interconnectedness*

There are other types of links the narrator records, which will not be discussed at length here for reasons of space. For example, there are the various types of bonds establishing

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<sup>13</sup> I have not been able to ascertain whether this verb does indeed exist or not and, upon consulting him on the matter, Javier Marías has maintained he knows no more than his narrator (Letter, 16 July 2000). It would not be surprising if a verb denoting such a relationship did exist, as there are myriads of Anglo-Saxon words with the prefixes ‘gæ-’, ‘ge-’, or ‘gader’ designating all sorts of ties, kinships, or unions.

a certain affinity between the cities of Madrid and London and Spain and England/Britain (40, 51-2, 153, 180, 213, 247, 315).

There are also those links associating actual and potential worlds. As in all of Mariás' novels from *El siglo* onwards and as I argued with regard to *El hombre sentimental* in particular, where the imagination makes potential worlds incarnate, *Mañana* contains abundant speculative or conjectural passages and scenes in which the narrator explores potential realities and unrealities with his imagination, contemplating what could be and what could have taken place but did not. So, for example, there are a number of conjectural scenes, such as those we saw in the previous three novels and, particularly, the ones I considered in detail in Chapter III and like the one mentioned above, in which the narrator's imagination is liberated from confinement to his present circumstances as he explores, using similar sequences of tenses, potential worlds by imagining what might be the case (22-4, 27-8, 66, 177-182).

Furthermore, the narrator shows how these run parallel to or underlie the actual world, how the former have effects on the latter, and how these worlds are interrelated as they all contribute to configuring a more expansive and comprehensive world, a world determined not only by that which did occur, but also by that which could have been but was not and that which could be. An example of this is the link the narrator sees between Deán and his lover which would have been strengthened by her having an abortion, by the *absence* of a child, had Deán not found out that she was not pregnant and that consolidating their relationship through the mock abortion was precisely her plan; ‘“Sí, eso es, el vínculo”, respondió Deán, “no hay menos vínculo porque deje de existir lo que

pudo existir, al contrario, quizá hay más unión todavía, quizá une más la renuncia a lo que pudo ser” (351).<sup>14</sup>

The philosopher Julián Marías has explained this idea succinctly: ‘La vida no es sólo lo que hacemos, sino tanto por lo menos lo que no hemos hecho pero hemos deseado radicalmente, y lo que nos hubiera podido pasar’ (1993, 190). His son has echoed this idea, not only in his fiction, but also in some of his articles and talks: ‘Las personas tal vez consistimos, en suma, tanto en lo que somos como en lo que no hemos sido [...] quizá estamos hechos de igual medida de lo que fue y de lo que pudo ser’ (Marías 1995e, 417).<sup>15</sup> This idea is related and can be traced back to the potential and the actual in Aristotle (see, for example, Aristotle [1933]).<sup>16</sup> It also recalls a famous story, ‘El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan’, by Jorge Luis Borges, to mention a writer with whom Marías has many striking affinities, where the idea of various potential temporalities, of a series of infinite times exhausting all possibilities and all being actualized simultaneously by one man, instead of opting for only one among them, is discussed and enacted (Borges 1989a).<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that Marías, like Borges, has also experimented with the idea of the convergence of two distinct temporalities both having been actualized in the short story ‘La canción de Lord Rendall’, where a soldier returns from the Great War to his home and is confronted with a person who is himself (Marías 1993g, 127-139). Shakespeare’s tragedies, to mention another writer who has had an evident impact on Marías’ work, are also preoccupied with potential and

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<sup>14</sup> Ruth Christie, in an essay which sheds further light on this concept of ‘lo que pudo ser’ in Marías’ writing, argues: ‘The concept of “lo que pudo ser” is employed to undermine the implicit equation of the real with the physical, and the imaginary with the fictional’ (1995b, 143). As I argue and as we shall see, it contributes to the interconnectedness of the world.

<sup>15</sup> Speech delivered on 2 August 1995 in Caracas upon receipt of the *Rómulo Gallegos* literary prize for *Mañana*. For another discussion of this idea see also the article ‘Desde una novela no necesariamente castiza’ in Marías 1993a.

<sup>16</sup> For extended discussions of this idea in Aristotle see Hintikka (1981) and Dancy (1981).

<sup>17</sup> For further affinities between Marías and Borges see Christie (1995b, 142, n. 21).

actual worlds, with the destruction of the potential by the actual. As Ryan states: 'In his Elizabethan romantic comedies and in the haunting last plays of his Jacobean period, Shakespeare's gaze is levelled at the remote horizon of what could be, rather than absorbed in the immediate tyranny of what is' (Ryan 1995, 106).

In a sense, in *Mañana* Marías actualizes other potential worlds, but not by making them existent: rather, the implication is that unrealities and potential realities have effects and make a significant and meaningful contribution to the world precisely by constituting a latent reality, like the past, which forms an intricate part of life. The narrator repeatedly refers to these latent realities as *el revés* and *la negra espalda del tiempo* (69, 217, 231, 271, 367), an expression he had already used in *Todas las almas*.

#### *f) Permanent interconnectedness*

The various associations the narrator discovers and traces come to form a vertiginous web of interconnectedness embracing urban, national, and personal pasts and present, life and death, seemingly disparate lives and people, cities, countries, and potential and actual worlds, all encompassed by the spectral topography of Madrid. This web is vertiginous – like the Anglo-Saxon verb and the relationship it designates – because the interconnectedness is potentially infinite and it makes the narrator and the reader glimpse this infinity, 'una red con estribaciones o afluentes múltiples que podrían llevarse hasta el infinito' (210). Why and how the narrator is impelled to establish this web of interconnectedness are two questions that can perhaps be briefly addressed by mentioning three interrelated factors.

Firstly, the state of enchantment in which the narrator finds himself and in which the interconnectedness originates is a kind of mourning: from the moment that Marta



dies in his arms the narrator becomes obsessively and exclusively absorbed in and by Marta's world. As Freud has explained, profound mourning is nothing other than such an immersion, a

turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of [the dead person]. It is easy to see that this inhibition and circumscription of the ego is the expression of an exclusive devotion to mourning which leaves nothing over for other purposes or other interests. (Freud 1984b, 252)

This is an apt description of the narrator's state, as he becomes exclusively absorbed in and by Marta's world.

Secondly, the narrator, as are all of Mariás' narrators from *El hombre sentimental* onwards, is of a superstitious nature (see 168, 257, 261, 291). And, as I already demonstrated in the discussion of *Corazón tan blanco*, one of the consequences of the superstitious view of the world is also that, potentially, everything is interconnected.

Thirdly, therefore, superstition is related to the exacerbated associative capacity which characterizes the narrator and which was discussed in Chapters III and IV, something of which he himself is very aware and which contributes to his digressive thinking: 'La superstición es sólo una forma como otra cualquiera de pensamiento, una forma que acentúa y regula las asociaciones, una exacerbación, una enfermedad' (257). Here we have again the equation of storytelling – as far as it is the art of association (Wellek and Warren 1956, 88) – and mental disorder or illness. Indeed, as I mentioned in Chapter III, the link between literary creativity and mental disorder or madness is a long-standing one, dating back to Ancient Greece, where the poet was seen as 'possessed', a view not too dissimilar to Jung's, while Freud saw artistic creation as

related to neurosis (Wellek and Warren 1956, 81; Jung 1966, 101; Freud 1991).<sup>18</sup> In the essay on literary creativity discussed, Javier Marías himself has reviewed this link arguing that a writer's mind is primarily full of words and that the anomaly in the case of writers (as opposed to musicians or painters, for example) is that they find themselves in permanent and inescapable contact with the material or tool they work with – words – thus provoking ‘un trastorno relacionado con la percepción de ese material’ (Marías 1993e, 260; see also Wellek and Warren 1956, 88). Thus, mourning, superstition, and a heightened associative and digressive capacity related to a temporary mental disorder, all contribute to the way in which, as I argued in Chapter III, the creative imagination becomes the carrier or vehicle of connections and discoveries and to the way in which the narrator imaginatively weaves the closely-knit tapestry of interconnectedness in this novel.

However, this state becomes unbearable for the narrator and he feels he has to put a halt to his exacerbated associative capacity and dispel his superstition: ‘Tenía que desvincular mis asociaciones e ideas, disipar mis supersticiones’ (261). But, despite his efforts, he does not quite manage to overcome this enchanted condition: ‘Y al contar no tuve la sensación de salir de mi encantamiento del que no he salido ni quizá nunca salga’ (278). The associative way of thinking becomes a habit, ‘el modo de pensar que para mí ya es costumbre, el modo del encantamiento que es un latido incesante del pensamiento’ (292). The novel ends with the narrator's enhanced associative faculties in full flow.

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<sup>18</sup> For an account of the historical and literary dimensions of creativity and a general bibliography on the subject see Percival (1997b).

g) *The interconnectedness of the world*

In the aforementioned essay on literary creativity, Marías adds that as a writer he often experiences a sensation of madness brought about by ‘una hipertrofia de la capacidad para ver la relación entre todas las cosas, para no ver nada fuera del extenso tejido que es el mundo – el mundo novelasco de cada novela, se entiende –’ (Marías 1993e).<sup>19</sup> This sums up what I have said about the narrator and it also bears witness to the primary effect of the web of interconnectedness enveloping the novel: it is an attempt to realize what Italo Calvino describes as literature’s ‘ancient desire to represent the multiplicity of relationships, both in effect and potentiality’ (Calvino 1993, 112). For Calvino this attempt is characteristic of twentieth-century literature and he sees the contemporary novel ‘above all as a network of connections between the events, the people, and the things of the world’ (Calvino 1993, 105). Citing the Italian novelist Carlo Emilio Gadda as exemplary of this attempt, Calvino argues that the contemporary novel is a vast net attempting to represent the world as a knot ‘without in the least diminishing the inextricable complexity or, to put it better, the simultaneous presence of the most disparate elements that converge to determine every event’; in the twentieth-century novel the knowledge of things is ‘seen as the convergence of infinite relationships, past and future, real or possible’ (Calvino 1993, 105-7). What Calvino says is equally true of the novel I have been discussing: the tissue of interconnectedness in *Mañana* configures a *Weltanschauung* which suggests that everything in the world (of the novel) is interrelated.

This idea is not originally a literary one. It is closely related to the idea of ‘the chain of being’ governing nature, which Arthur Lovejoy traced back to Aristotle’s

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Amis calls this ‘the novelists’ addiction to seeing parallels and making connections’ (2000, 7).

principles of continuity, plenitude and gradation, showing that, despite being the great representative of a logic which rested on the ‘assumption of the possibility of clear divisions and rigorous classification’, Aristotle ‘first suggested the limitations and dangers of classification, and the non-conformity of those sharp divisions which are so indispensable for language and so convenient for our ordinary mental operations’ (Lovejoy 1966, 57-8). Let us not forget that seventeenth-century thinking in particular was also characterized by a belief in a multiple web of correspondences and interrelations in the universe (Wellek 1963, 109), an idea which informed style, in the form of digressions, uncertainty, aphorisms, or the loose period, as I showed in Chapter II. Lovejoy shows that the rejection of the idea of species by, for example, Locke, Leibniz, Buffon, Bonnet, Goldsmith, and others, is a consequence of an awareness of the danger of divisions, because they are artificial or man-made and arbitrary, and is rooted in a view of the world as a closely interconnected place:

There are not many differences in mental habit more significant than that between the habit of thinking in discrete, well-defined class concepts and that of thinking in terms of continuity, of delicate shadings-off of everything into something else, of the overlapping of essences, so that the whole notion of species comes to seem an artifice of thought not truly applicable to the fluency, the, so to say, universal overlappingness of the world. (Lovejoy 1966, 57)

Marías’ interconnectedness is informed by the latter mental habit and attests that, as Francisco Rico puts it in his discussion of the same idea, ‘nada existe ni se deja entender aislado, fuera de la gran cadena del ser’ (Rico 1970, 80). There is virtually no element in *Mañana* that is not in some way related to another; nothing can be understood in isolation; nothing escapes this interconnectedness because, as Calvino says of Gadda’s work, ‘the least thing is seen as a center of a network of relationships’ (Calvino 1993, 107). Consequently, the interconnectedness embracing all the elements of the narrative subverts imposed limits or borders. It can also be extended to counteract a view of the

world as consisting of distinct elements and is reminiscent of Derrida's concept of supplementarity as developed in *Of grammatology* (Derrida 1976), since the things and people of the world cannot be comprehended in isolation as autarchic, independent entities, but are interdependent, the result of their interconnectedness to other things and people. Hence, interconnectedness also validates the ideas of cosmopolitanism and universalism, as by implication it embraces and joins the entire world.

## *II. A question of style (again)*

We have seen how the web of interconnectedness is woven through mostly analogical links (*como* and *como si* are the adverb and adverbial construction that are predominantly used to introduce the links). All the connections, all the links, are established through the errant writing, through digressions and other elements which can be deemed to be partly the result of an errant and imaginative mind, such as aphorisms, analogies (especially through similes), conjectural passages, repetitions, and imaginative associations. All the types of connections surface as a consequence of digressive, aphoristic, repetitive, conjectural, imaginative, associative, and analogical writing. (Indeed, the aphorism can be said to be a digression of the highest order, as I suggested in Chapter II, since it always involves a movement from a concrete thought to an abstract one.) These additions accumulate and expand, forming the net of interconnectedness. To complete the above quotation of Calvino, 'the least thing is seen as the center of a network of relationships which the writer cannot restrain himself from following, multiplying the details so that his descriptions and digressions become infinite' (Calvino 1993, 107).

Thus, stylistically, the interconnectedness is a result of digressions and other stylistic elements, although the (errant) style itself could, in turn, be motivated by the *Weltanschauung* it brings to the surface, as well as by the creative imagination and its associative processes. Style and interconnectedness are thus inextricably bound, but not only in his last novel: all of his work from *Los dominios del lobo* onwards is characterized by the importance which style and form acquire, and becomes more purposefully digressive as his writing develops. The culmination of this development can be said to be his last two novels in particular, where, as César Romero puts it, ‘todo se va explicando conforme avanza el poderoso estilo narrativo de Marías, descubriéndose las conexiones existentes entre las diversas situaciones y realidades inventadas por el novelista’ (Romero 1995, 115). Even in Marías’ first two novels, which consisted of pure, playful diegesis, we witness, through their consciously imitative nature, what from *El siglo* onwards is the very clear recognition of the supreme importance of style. Starting with *El hombre sentimental*, one can trace the gradual attempt to wed the stylistic and diegetic imperatives, mostly with the help of the creative imagination, culminating in the balance struck in *Corazón tan blanco* and *Mañana*, where diegesis is dependent on, and interrelated with, style and the imagination, not least because it is the various formal and stylistic elements which create the narrative, like, for example, the repetitions or the analogical relationships which construct narratives because, coupled with, or as, digressions they assure the transition from one point of the narrative chain to the other, as well as establishing the links between narrative elements. Thus, as I argued in Chapter III, digressions are anything but irrelevant, extraneous, secondary attachments to a main story. Instead, they are central and crucial to the narrative as they are responsible, together with the other stylistic



features and the creative imagination, for its amplification and the exploration of the conceptual ramifications, the interconnectedness of the world.

It is this recognition of the importance of style which announces the maturity Mariás attains in his later work. Juan Benet explains in *La inspiración y el estilo*:

La madurez supone casi siempre un estilo porque es el estado que comienza con la decisión de abandonar la búsqueda del vacío para dedicarse al pulimiento de la herramienta [...] Sus temas ya no serán tan originales, ni siquiera nuevos, ni – quizá – actuales en ese sentido periodístico del término; derivará su oficio hacia aquellos otros eternos a los que – supremo orgullo de una carrera laureada – será capaz de dar nuevo brillo con las delicias de un estilo único y depurado. (Benet 1973, 34-5)

Benet goes on to argue that it is precisely style which provides the ‘state of grace’ which furnishes the writer with a path to knowledge, as the writer finds himself in a state of enchantment (Benet 1973, 38, 86). This is precisely Mariás’ case: his development can be best understood in terms of a gradual process of polishing, cultivating, and perfecting his formal and stylistic means which provide him with an enchanted way of comprehending and apprehending the world, and an associative and imaginative capacity empowered and liberated by the formal and stylistic development, culminating in his late fiction. The state of enchantment in which the narrator also finds himself in this last novel as a consequence of the onset of a sudden exacerbated associative capacity, is thus, as were the narrators’ dream-like state in *El hombre sentimental*, disturbed condition in *Todas las almas*, and state of unease in *Corazón tan blanco*, also a metaphor for the process of writing which leads to the stylistic (digressive) unfolding of the interconnectedness of the world. The knowledge or discovery of this interconnectedness is then probably the result of a stylistic development, rather than a *Weltanschauung* which has determined the style. To put it crudely: it is not the message which has determined the medium, but the medium which has invented and discovered

the message. (This also further clarifies the author's uncertainty surrounding what his novels are about and why he only discovers that after having completed them.)

Consequently, Marías can be said to come into his own in his later work. Arguably, he fully comes into his own in his last novel, where a concrete and all-embracing *Weltanschauung* is given a definite shape as a result of the culmination of a stylistic development, coupled with a true homecoming in the form of a definite turn to Madrid as the setting and as a significant element in the narrative. It would not be too far-fetched to maintain that his turn to Spain is linked to literary maturity, the coming home to the coming into one's own.<sup>20</sup> Marías' literary development is thus characterized by a process of stylistic maturation and a concomitant crystallization of a *Weltanschauung*, as well as by a gradual approach of Spain as a significant setting.

However, the insular, foggy, reasonably non-Spanish, non-folkloric Madrid configured in his last novel, haunted or inhabited by its very Spanish past, attests another balance struck, namely that between foreign and Spanish settings, foreignness and Spanishness, otherness and sameness, and the strange and the familiar, as Marías' Madrid is both foreign and Spanish, thus indicating how, as in Freud's definition of the uncanny, the foreign or strange inhabits the familiar and how, in Julia Kristeva's words, the uncanny or foreignness 'is within us: we are our own foreigners' (Kristeva 1991, 181).

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<sup>20</sup> This argument regarding Marías' novelistic evolution is shared by Romero in his article on the last novel: 'Tenía que alcanzar la madurez para volver a su patria' (1995, 111).

## Conclusion:

### The ontology of art

Yo creo que ante una situación así el hombre de letras no tiene otra salida que la creación de un estilo. Ninguna barrera puede prevalecer contra el estilo siendo así que se trata del esfuerzo del escritor por romper un cerco mucho más estrecho, permanente y riguroso: aquel que le impone el dictado de la realidad. Es un esfuerzo inaudito porque la realidad que lo rodea es infinita en extensión y profundidad. Esa realidad se presenta ante el escritor bajo un doble cariz: es acoso y campo de acción. Mientras el escritor no cuenta con un instrumento para dominarla se ve acosado por ella; pero un día su cerco es perforado y toda su inmensa y compacta hueste pasa a formar parte de las filas del artista y a engrosar sus efectivos, como ese dubitativo ejército de mercenarios dispuesto siempre a batallar por el mejor pagador. De forma que el enemigo – aquella realidad indefinible e infinita – se torna ahora su aliado. *¿Qué barreras pueden prevalecer contra un hombre que en lo sucesivo será capaz de inventar la realidad?* (Benet 1973, 179-180 – my italics)

Juan Benet's concluding sentences of *La inspiración y el estilo* succinctly outline Javier Marías' novelistic development. In order to escape realism and Spanishness, Marías forges a style which progressively grows, evolves, and matures, and which creates a literature with a life of its own, an art that has its own ontology. This autonomization of his literature, the independence of fiction from reality, is achieved through form and style, through the *how* or the treatment of matter, as is evidenced in all the features discussed in this thesis. The imitative form of *Los dominios del lobo* and *Travesía del horizonte*, the baroquism of *El siglo*, the work of the imagination in *El hombre sentimental*, the treatment of biographical material, the associative processes, and the exergual forms of *Todas las almas*, the effects of repetition in *Corazón tan blanco*, as well as the interconnectedness of *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* reveal the importance of form and style in Marías' novelistic maturation. They show that 'cuando

se tiene un estilo la posesión de la realidad que se inventa viene dada por añadidura' (Romero 1995, 115) and also bear witness to the fact that form and style become a vehicle of discovery and a way of making knowledge permanently interesting. Marías' novels demonstrate that the permanent value of the works cannot reside in the content *per se* (the knowledge, the information, and the themes), 'que un día lo tiene, pero que al año, o a la década siguiente lo puede dejar de tener' (Benet 1973, 137-138), what Falk calls the 'transitoriness of particular manifestations and the insignificance to which they are reduced by passing time' (1971, 282). Instead, the novels' import has to be sought in the way in which matter is configured, the treatment which imbues it with a more permanent existence, a timelessness and universality free from the ephemeral nature of particular manifestations. As Benet argues, 'el estilo no es más que un esfuerzo del escritor por superar el interés extrínseco de la información para extraer de ella su naturaleza caediza y confeccionarle otra perdurable' (1973, 138). As I discussed in Chapter III, it is not the objective nature of the themes that matter, but the subjective imaginative use to which they are put.

In Marías' work, the freedom of literature is allegorized in the equation of narrative or writing with the temporary states of dream, disturbance, malaise, and enchantment in which successive narrators from *El hombre sentimental* onwards find themselves. (This is, in fact, prefigured by the obsessive state, likened to an illness, which befalls the narrator and the protagonists of *Travesía del horizonte* in their quests for the various secrets.) The consequences of these states are the suspension of normality and irregular or deviant apprehensions of the reality surrounding them, further fuelled by the narrators' superstitiousness, through exacerbated imaginative and associative minds. The exclusive use of the first person in all of the novels except the first and third,

accompanied by a near-identical, distinctive, and recognizable voice, and a subjective and limited point of view, also have as a consequence an inescapable confinement to the minds of the narrators and their phantasmagoric worlds which accentuates the separation from more 'objective' representations of an existing reality. Their imaginative, errant, digressive, associative, conjectural, speculative, uncertain, and aphoristic narratives reveal a distrust of certainty and a profound scepticism regarding the possibility of obtaining true and certain knowledge of the world.

Curiously, as I indicated in the preceding chapter, unlike all the other narrators, the narrator of *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* does not fully recover from the temporary disorder affecting him, the state of enchantment. 'Y al contar no tuve la sensación de salir de mi encantamiento del que aún no he salido ni quizá nunca salga' (Marías 1994a, 278), he affirms at one point, adding later that the enchanted – imaginative, associative, superstitious – way of thinking has become a habit: 'El modo de pensar que para mí ya es costumbre, el modo del encantamiento que es un latido incesante en el pensamiento' (292). This could be deemed to be significant in light of the facts that, for the first time, the narrator's 'disorder' is not temporary and it occurs in Marías' last true novel to date, which is followed by a somewhat different type of narrative. The permanent state of enchantment in which his last narrator finds himself could again be read allegorically, suggesting that this type of narrative state will thenceforward not be restricted to novels. This would explain the nature of Marías' last full-length narrative, *Negra espalda del tiempo*, which is a narration of events pertaining to existing or empirical reality. Crucially, the real anecdotes, episodes, events, or stories are here submitted to the same formal and stylistic treatment of matter that we saw in his novels. The first person narration of *Negra espalda* reveals the same imaginative,

associative, uncertain, conjectural, aphoristic, and repetitive voice, and is, in fact, considerably more errant and digressive than any of his novels, therefore lacking the internal unity of the latter, although again bearing witness to a strong belief in the interconnectedness of the world.

*Negra espalda* is important for two reasons. Firstly, it helps frame Javier Marías' novelistic development in that it is not a novel in the strict sense and thus constitutes a departure from that evolution. Hence, it also draws attention to the internal unity that characterizes Marías' novelistic coming into his own. However, the essential difference between *Negra espalda* and his preceding novels is less a formal or stylistic one, although it does lack a strong internal structure, and more one of subject matter: the difference lies primarily in the origins of the bulk of the matter and not so much in its treatment. Secondly, it shows how the formal and stylistic traits arising from his novelistic development are now put to a more ambitious use, namely to invent reality, to treat and recount existing reality no differently from fiction and to show the fiction that reality becomes when it is recounted, that, in fact, there is no other way of narrating existing reality than the one also used for fiction: “‘Relatar lo ocurrido’” [...] es sólo posible como invención’ (Marías 1998a, 10). That is to say that reality, as soon as it is recounted, is always submitted to the same imaginative (‘Para relatar lo ocurrido hay que haberlo imaginado además’ [Marías 1998a, 196]), associative, uncertain, conjectural, repetitive, and digressive treatment to which any other material making up a narrative has to yield.

All of Marías' narrators – in particular those of his late novels, thus reflecting his maturation – discover and explore latent, potential, and other interrelated levels of reality and unreality, thus creating a world of interrelationships where ultimately



everything acquires significance because everything is interconnected as everything is seen as part of a unique world of interrelationships. Now, if we accept that we experience existing, empirical, non-fictional, non-novelistic reality 'by virtue of our involvement in it and by virtue of its functionality', that 'we grasp only limited aspects of existing reality and we experience emotionally only those interrelationships to which we are individually predisposed' (Falk 1971, 285), not least because, as Kant argues, the imagination is determined and not free in the act of perception (Kant 1924), then the freedom of art, literature and, in this case, Mariás' novels, may be the only way of our being able to apprehend fully and accept the vertiginous extent of interconnectedness of the world in which we live, the 'true being of existing reality', as Falk puts it;

In the world of represented reality we behold potentialities which are concealed from us in our confrontation with existing reality; we perceive what reality can be, rather than simply what it is in the restricted world of our daily lives. Art liberates reality through structure and expands our understanding as we perceive what reality truly is, when its potential becomes manifest within the work of art. (1971, 285-286)

Perceiving structure is the result of our vision being displaced from the particular to the universal and timeless. Hence, paradoxically, it is the autonomy of literature, the independence of fiction from existing or empirical reality as we experience it, which offers us a timeless and universal vision of the world. This vision or *Weltanschauung* is achieved precisely through the treatment of matter, through form and style, which renders matter timeless and universal. The freedom of art is thus the only guarantee and possibility of our glimpsing the world in its entirety. This is why, as Mariás' narrator in his last novel affirms, 'el mundo depende de sus relatores' (1994a, 299).

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